

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 173

SO 028 162

AUTHOR Ross, Annie; And Others
TITLE Life Expressions: West African Art in the Collection of the Seattle Art Museum. Art for the Individual. Art for the Community. Art for Gods and Spirits. Curriculum Resource Unit.
INSTITUTION Seattle Art Museum, WA.
SPONS AGENCY General Electric Foundation, Ossining, N.Y.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 190p.; Accompanying color slides not available from EDRS.
AVAILABLE FROM Seattle Art Museum, Education Department, PO Box 22000, Seattle, WA 98122. (\$32 plus \$3 shipping and handling; (Washington residents include \$3.01 tax).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Non-Print Media (100)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *African Culture; Art; Art Activities; *Art Education; Clothing; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Instructional Materials; *Material Culture; Museums; Teaching Guides; Thematic Approach; Units of Study
IDENTIFIERS *Africa (West); African Art; Cameroon; Ghana; Liberia; Mali; Masks; Nigeria; Religious Art; Textiles

ABSTRACT

This teacher resource packet, which includes 20 color slides with a descriptive script and comprehensive lesson guide, aims at engaging students in a study of the people, art, and culture of several West African nations, including the countries of Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, and Nigeria. The packet, designed for use by general classroom teachers of K-12 students but adaptable for independent use, presents images of West African art objects in the Seattle (Washington) Art Museum permanent collection. The multidisciplinary unit is organized in 4 sections: (1) "Art for the Individual"; (2) "Art for the Community"; (3) "Art for Gods and Spirits"; and (4) a supplementary section of activities especially suitable for K-2 students. Fourteen individual lessons, given in the 3 major instructional units, focus on a slide image or on provided student handouts and worksheets. Each lesson is outlined with a summary, a goal, and objectives and begins with information for the teacher to study and present. Suggested discussion questions follow. Student activities are suggested and reproducible handouts, including photographs, are given. A concluding section contains a slide list and bibliography. (MM)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED 410 173

West African Art

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

JILL
RULLKOETTER

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

LIFE EXPRESSIONS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SO 028 162

Life Expressions:
West African Art
in the Collection of
the Seattle Art Museum

Art for the Individual
Art for the Community
Art for Gods and Spirits

Curriculum Resource Unit

Annie Ross, Museum Educator

Dr. Larry Adeyemi
Toyin Ajayi
Dr. Joe Appiah-Kusi
Pamela McClusky

2045

Text and slides copyright 1992 Seattle Art Museum

This curriculum resource unit has been made possible by generous funding from the
GE Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank these advisers for their assistance in the development of this unit:

Larry A. Adeyemi, Ph.D., Nigerian cross-cultural educator
Toyin Ajayi, Nigerian educator
Joe Appiah-Kusi, M.D., educator-physician
Carolyn Blackmon, chair, Department of Education, Field Museum of Natural History
Nike Davis, textile artist, Nigeria
Lora Chiora Dye, Zimbabwe performer/educator
Carol Eastman, professor of anthropology, University of Washington
Leasa Farrar-Frazer, education specialist, National Museum of African Art
Robert Farris Thompson, professor of African and African-American art history, Master Timothy Dwight College, Yale University
Larry Gossett, executive director, Central Area Motivation Program
Pat Guild, education and curriculum specialist, Antioch University of Seattle
Simon Ottenberg, professor emeritus of anthropology, University of Washington
Bonnie Pitman, deputy director, University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley

We would like to thank these educators who piloted this unit:

Roger Fernandes, curriculum specialist, Seattle Indian Health Board
Rich Gurr, teacher, Parkwood Elementary School
Cheryl Johnson, teacher, Shorecrest High School
Sauda Mdahoma, teacher, B.F. Day Elementary School
Donna Shy, teacher, Whitworth Elementary School
Carol Williams, principal, B.F. Day Elementary School

We are grateful for input from teachers of the Seattle and Shoreline School Districts who attended teacher workshops on African art at the Seattle Art Museum (August 1991 and January 1992).

We would like to thank these individuals who assisted us with photographs and images:

Herbert M. Cole, professor of art, University of California at Santa Barbara
Eberhard Fischer, director, Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Duane Hoffmann, graphic artist, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*
John Pemberton III, Crosby Professor of Religion, Amherst College
William Perry, deputy director, The National Geographic Society

Doran H. Ross, deputy director, Fowler Museum of Cultural History, University of California at Los Angeles
Bert Samples, artist, Houston
Alexander Ubi Iwara, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Dennis Warren, art historian, Anthropologist
Christopher Wright, photographic librarian, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland

The following staff members of the Seattle Art Museum assisted with the production of this unit and the related teacher workshops (August 1991 and January 1992).

Helen Abbott, media and publications manager
Rebecca Allan, museum educator
Sharon Birzer, graphic artist
Charlotte Brame, word processor
Susan Dirk, photographer
Linda Haverfield, former museum educator
Lidia Huante, NEH project assistant
Laura Kearney, media center assistant
Kristen Lohse, education assistant
Sarah Loudon, senior museum educator
Paul Macapia, photographer
Mari Mullen, consulting editor
Nanette Pyne, director of development
Jill Rullkoetter, head of education
Nancy Stumvoll, graphic artist
Gary Sutto, photographer
Paula Thurman, museum editor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS	vii
SECTION 1: ART FOR THE INDIVIDUAL	Section 1: 1
LESSON 1: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque	Section 1: 3
LESSON 2: Throne of a Kom Queen	Section 1: 19
LESSON 3: <i>Ma Kpon</i> (Gameboard)	Section 1: 35
LESSONS 4, 5, and 6: <i>Adire</i> , <i>Adinkra</i> , and <i>Kente</i> Cloth ..	Section 1: 49
LESSON 4: <i>Adire</i> Cloth	Section 1: 51
LESSON 5: <i>Adinkra</i> Cloth	Section 1: 71
LESSON 6: <i>Kente</i> Cloth	Section 1: 89
LESSON 7: <i>Wunkirmian</i> (Feast-Making Spoon)	Section 1: 105
SECTION 2: ART FOR THE COMMUNITY	Section 2: 117
LESSON 8: Tyi Wara: Male and Female Antelope Headdress	Section 2: 121
LESSON 9: Epa Mask	Section 2: 133
LESSON 10: Basinjom: Mask and Gown	Section 2: 147
SECTION 3: ART FOR GODS AND SPIRITS	Section 3: 159
LESSON 11: Ogo Elegba: Eshu Staff	Section 3: 161
LESSON 12: <i>Ile Ori</i> (House of the Head)	Section 3: 175
LESSON 13: <i>Ivri</i> (Community Shrine Figure)	Section 3: 187
LESSON 14: Mother with Twins	Section 3: 197
SECTION 4: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: K-2 ACTIVITIES	Section 4: 211
SLIDE LIST	Section 4: 219
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Section 4: 223

HANDOUT LIST

SECTION 1: ART FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

HANDOUT 1:	Oba Akenzua II in Procession	Section 1:	4
HANDOUT 2:	Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque	Section 1:	13
HANDOUT 3:	Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque (detail)	Section 1:	15
HANDOUT 4:	Chief Dancing with an <i>Eben</i>	Section 1:	17
HANDOUT 5:	Queen Nefertiti	Section 1:	20
HANDOUT 6:	Afo-A-Kom with Two Companions	Section 1:	29
HANDOUT 7:	Throne of Queen Bo	Section 1:	31
HANDOUT 8:	Throne of Afo-A-Kom	Section 1:	33
HANDOUT 9:	Two Maasai Men Playing <i>Wari</i>	Section 1:	36
HANDOUT 10:	How to Make Your Own <i>Ma Kpon</i>	Section 1:	41
HANDOUT 11:	Paper Gameboard	Section 1:	43
HANDOUT 12:	Instructions for Playing the Game	Section 1:	45
HANDOUT 13:	Two Girls Playing <i>Wari</i>	Section 1:	47
HANDOUT 14:	A Woman Wearing <i>Adire Eleko</i>	Section 1:	50
HANDOUT 15:	Nike Davis with Stencil	Section 1:	59
HANDOUT 16:	Painting Fabric to Make <i>Adire</i>	Section 1:	61
HANDOUT 17:	Toye Ojo Wearing <i>Adire</i>	Section 1:	63
HANDOUT 18:	Ibadan Dun and Olokun Cloths	Section 1:	65
HANDOUT 19:	Samples of <i>Adire</i> Cloth Designs	Section 1:	67
HANDOUT 20:	More Samples of <i>Adire</i> Cloth Designs	Section 1:	69
HANDOUT 21:	<i>Adinkra</i> Cloth	Section 1:	79
HANDOUT 22:	Close-ups of <i>Adinkra</i> Designs	Section 1:	81
HANDOUT 23:	More Samples of <i>Adinkra</i> Designs	Section 1:	83
HANDOUT 24:	An Elder Wearing <i>Adinkra</i> Cloth	Section 1:	85
HANDOUT 25:	<i>Adinkra</i> Cloth Being Made	Section 1:	87
HANDOUT 26:	<i>Kente</i> Cloth - Aberewa Bene	Section 1:	97
HANDOUT 27:	A Garment Made of <i>Kente</i> Cloth	Section 1:	99
HANDOUT 28:	Names and Designs for Some Types of <i>Kente</i> Cloths	Section 1:	101
HANDOUT 29:	A Chief Wearing <i>Kente</i> with an <i>Adinkra</i> Cloth in Background	Section 1:	103
HANDOUT 30:	Dan Woman Using a Feast-Making Spoon	Section 1:	106
HANDOUT 31:	Feast-Making Spoon	Section 1:	113
HANDOUT 32:	Chameleon Design on Spoon	Section 1:	115

SECTION 2: ART FOR THE COMMUNITY

HANDOUT 33: Male and Female Tyi Wara Performing . . .	Section 2: 122
HANDOUT 34: Piling the Harvested Grains for Storage . . .	Section 2: 129
HANDOUT 35: Male and Female Tyi Wara	Section 2: 131
HANDOUT 36: Epa: Oloko (Lord of the Farm) Masquerade . . .	Section 2: 134
HANDOUT 37: Equestrian Epa Color Sheet (K-3)	Section 2: 141
HANDOUT 38: Epa Mask: Okoko (Lord of the Farm) . . .	Section 2: 143
HANDOUT 39: Woman Readyng Epa Mask	Section 2: 145
HANDOUT 40: Basinjom Masquerade in Cameroon	Section 2: 148
HANDOUT 41: Basinjom with Attendants	Section 2: 155
HANDOUT 42: Basinjom's Complete Ensemble	Section 2: 157

SECTION 3: ART FOR GODS AND SPIRITS

HANDOUT 43: A Devotee of Eshu Carries Her Shrine. . . .	Section 3: 162
HANDOUT 44: Third-Ranking Priestess Holding Eshu Figure . . .	Section 3: 171
HANDOUT 45: Eshu Staff	Section 3: 173
HANDOUT 46: <i>Ile Ori</i>	Section 3: 176
HANDOUT 47: <i>Eulipian I</i> by Bert Samples	Section 3: 185
HANDOUT 48: <i>Ivri</i>	Section 3: 188
HANDOUT 49: <i>Ivri</i> (close-up)	Section 3: 195
HANDOUT 50: A Shrine with Clothed Portrait Figures . . .	Section 3: 198
HANDOUT 51: Terra Cotta Portrait Head	Section 3: 203
HANDOUT 52: Terra Cotta Mother and Twins	Section 3: 205
HANDOUT 53: An Outdoor Shrine	Section 3: 207

HANDOUT 54: Map of Africa	Section 3: 209
-------------------------------------	----------------

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: K-2 ACTIVITIES

HANDOUT 55: Leopard Belt Mask, Drawing Activity	Section 4: 212
HANDOUT 56: Leopard Belt Mask, Connect the Dots!	Section 4: 213
HANDOUT 57: Leopard Belt Mask, Puzzle	Section 4: 214
HANDOUT 58: Leopard Belt Mask, Write a Story	Section 4: 215
HANDOUT 59: Leopard Belt Mask, Leopard Matching Game . . .	Section 4: 216
HANDOUT 60: Leopard Belt Mask, "Life in the Forest" Mobile	Section 4: 217
HANDOUT 61: Leopard Belt Mask, Make a Clay Mask . . .	Section 4: 218

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

How to Use this Curriculum Resource Unit

This curriculum resource unit is one of an ongoing series of curriculum-based materials created by the Education Department of the Seattle Art Museum. It was developed as a collaborative project by members of the African and African-American community, academic advisers, educators, artists, curriculum development specialists, and Seattle Art Museum staff.

Before beginning the lesson plans, please review these instructions carefully.

TEACHERS: PLEASE READ "TEACHING ABOUT AFRICAN ART," p. xiii, BEFORE GIVING YOUR LESSON.

The lessons begin with questions to engage your students in discussions about some common beliefs about the people, art, and culture of several West African nations (example: *Are there kings in Africa?*). The discussion allows students to talk about their beliefs about Africa. Please keep the discussion focused and brief, and then lead your students into the lesson. Perform your lesson and then use the introductory question again. This question may serve as a point of departure for your topic as well as a method of evaluation.

The series of lessons begins with the discussion questions and photo. These may be photocopied for your students to look at while performing the lesson. The lessons are presented with *summaries*, *goals*, and *objectives*. *Background information* follows, for the teacher to study and present to his or her students, with suggested discussion questions. Finally, there are activities with handout sheets.

The objectives of the curriculum resource unit are to:

1. Introduce students K-12 and their teachers to selected works of art from the African art collection at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM).
2. Provide activities and discussion ideas for classroom use about specific objects in the Seattle Art Museum collection.
3. Encourage an understanding of the people of West Africa, the environment, spirituality, and art.
4. Provide students with information that can be applied to their own in-class art projects: materials and design principles, meanings in art, uses of art in West African society, and the cultural context of art objects.

5. Assist students in creating associations with their own lives and the world around them and the meanings of the African works of art.

In this unit, a selection of West African art objects in the Seattle Art Museum's permanent collection is examined. This curriculum resource unit is designed for use by the classroom teacher to teach the art and culture of the people of West Africa, specifically the countries of Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, and Nigeria.

The unit is divided into three sections that are based on the three themes of the gallery installation at the Seattle Art Museum: **Art for the Individual**, **Art for the Community**, and **Art for Gods and Spirits**.

S L I D E S

Slides

A set of 20 slides and a descriptive script is included with this unit. The slides depict art objects housed in the Seattle Art Museum. The images have been selected to reflect some of the major culture areas represented in the galleries of the museum and do not represent the full range of the art, languages, or cultures of Africa.

- For an in-depth look at a specific work, the teacher may review a slide with its corresponding lesson for the specific art object and perform the in-class lesson (discussion and activity) with the students.
- The teacher may use the slide set alone with the enclosed slide script on page 4:219.
- Slides may be easily converted into color photocopies. This can be done at many copy centers. The color photocopies may be laminated for classroom use, or placed together to look like a poster. Seeing the works of art everyday will help students remember their lessons on African art.

Options

You may go through the slide set with your class and have students choose an object they would like to study further. Or you may select an object with a theme or meaning that parallels another topic your class is studying. For example, the Throne of a Kom Queen may be integrated with lessons on history, autobiographies of famous persons, or comparisons with world mythology. You may wish to select an object that parallels another topic your class is studying: Tyi Wara could be discussed in conjunction with agriculture, environmental topics, or the sociology of communities.

Made up of fourteen lessons, the curriculum resource unit was initially formulated to prepare students for a visit to the museum. However, the series of lesson plans may be used independently of a museum visit, and the art objects presented may reach out to those students who will not be touring the galleries.

DISCUSSION

Each art object is described through **background information** and a series of suggested questions and answers set in *italic* type for **discussion**. Discussion questions (in ***bold italic*** type) are written to the teacher, accompanied by information-based responses (in plain *italic* type). Teachers may need to adapt discussion questions to the specific grade level of their students.

A **slide** image of the art object under discussion is included in the slide set. In some instances, a slide showing a *context* for the art object is included. Suggested **activities** are included at the end of each lesson. Activities can also be adapted for each grade level at the teacher's discretion. Teachers may photocopy **handouts** for their students to discuss an object further or to perform an activity. Handouts appear after the activities and are marked in the text (see list of Handouts, p. iv.).

The format and sequence of the sections follow the Washington State curriculum guidelines for schools. These guidelines address goals such as encouraging students to perceive, experience, understand, and create, as well as to develop aesthetic values.

ACTIVITIES

Each lesson in the curriculum resource unit concludes with a classroom art activity that you will find under the Activities heading. In addition, to help your students think about their experiences with the art, they may participate in one of these four main activities for any of the lessons in the unit:

1. Poetic Verse for Music and Literature

Students write a short story in first person as if the students were art objects. What do the objects see? What do they think as they sit in the gallery watching people? For example, students may imagine they are *kente* cloths. What would *kente* cloths say?

I was born in Ghana. I was worn by a famous person during a great ceremony. I saw people in the cities and in the villages. I was taken from Kumasi on a plane to New York, Los Angeles, and then Seattle, where I now sit in a case and look at visitors who come to see me.

2. Postcards to Friends

Students write postcards and mail them to family members, friends, teachers, or neighbors.

Ask students to draw a picture of the art on the front of the postcard. On the back of the postcard, they may place the object name in the upper left, with the name of its homeland. Students then write about the art. Have them describe the artwork, tell why they like it, and explain its original meaning. For example:



<i>Wow!</i> <i>I love Tyi Wara because Tyi Wara taught people of Mali how to farm, and Tyi Wara is very beautiful!</i>	
--	---

3. Impressions

Students draw impressions of the art objects they have studied. For example, see how the artist Bert Samples drew his impression of *ile ori* on page 3:185.

4. Song Composition

Students write short songs to address the meanings of the art objects they have studied.

- What does the art object mean?
- Does it talk about community identity or personal identity? Example: a song based on *ile ori* (p. 3:179) may have words that refer to personal destiny or faith. An example would be King Sunny Ade's song about personal destiny, "*Ori Mi Ja Fun Mi.*"

Levels

The curriculum resource unit is written for the teacher and is designed to be **adaptable for grades K-12** at the teacher's discretion. He or she will need to review the information and to modify his or her language to reach a specific age group. Specific activities for the early grades appear in **Special Supplement: K-3 Activities** and throughout the text. The section **Art for Gods and Spirits** is recommended for grades 9-12.

The concepts underlying the African art objects are complex. Therefore this curriculum resource unit has been written to follow a progression, from looking at **use and materials**, to **use and symbolism** (Art for the Individual), **use, meaning, and relevancy in public ceremony** (Art for the Community), and **spiritual and private beliefs** (Art for Gods and Spirits). The concepts examined in each section become progressively more complex. Each section of this unit builds upon the preceding sections.

This curriculum resource unit is designed for students who learn in different ways. Using a variety of teaching techniques and materials involves all students and helps them to feel that this art is available to them on a personal level; this gives students an opportunity to take in information through their preferred style of learning.

Students most responsive to the **observing and personalizing** method of learning (the Imaginative Learner) may find the activities, discussion, and slide viewing to their liking. Students involved in **thinking and information gathering** (the Analytic Learner) may enjoy the discussion most. The Common-sense Learner may prefer the action of performing activities, and the Dynamic Learner may like to apply lessons in activities and art projects (**self-designing and application of knowledge**).¹ Within the

¹ Bernice McCarthy, *4Mat in Action: Creative Lesson Plans for Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/Left Mode Techniques* (Barrington, IL: Excel, Inc., 1987).

curriculum resource unit, each lesson includes different learning strategies (art and writing activities, discussion, slide viewing, application of knowledge). Try rearranging the order of the suggested activities to address various learning styles.

Conclusion

Active participation in the lesson plans may help students understand and appreciate some of the art objects on display at the Seattle Art Museum. After working with this unit, students will be able to recognize specific pieces, feel a familiarity with them, and have a core of basic knowledge and understanding about West African art objects.

Music and Art

Some teachers like to play cassette tapes of African music in the classroom while their students do art activities. Below is a list of African artists whose music is available on cassette tape.

Nigeria:

King Sunny Ade; Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey; Fela; I. K. Dairo

Cameroon:

Manu Dibango; Les Petes Burlees (the Hot Heads)

Mali:

Salif Kieta (the Super Rail Band); Ali Farka Toure; Toumani Biabate

Cassettes of these and other African artists may be found in the World Music section of:

Tower Records
500 Mercer Street
Seattle, Washington 98109
206-283-4456

Some Thoughts on Teaching About West African Art in the Classroom

This series of lesson plans is based on art from five countries in West Africa. Through our outreach efforts in the Seattle public schools, we have found that many students have misconceptions about African people and African art.

Some **myths** about Africa that we have encountered include:

In Africa everyone is seriously ill or starving ("we see this on television all of the time"); no one is educated, goes to school, or speaks English; no one wears clothing; and everyone lives in a jungle ("we see this in Tarzan movies").

In reality:

- * Africa is a diverse continent. (*How many continents are in the world?*)
- * Africa has many countries. (*Compare how many countries are in Africa and how many are in North America.*)
- * Each country in Africa is made up of different groups of people, often speaking different (though sometimes related) languages. (*How many languages are spoken in North America? How many different ethnic groups live in North America?*)
- * Kingdoms have existed for many centuries in the continent of Africa. (*Where else in the world have ancient kingdoms existed? Are there kingdoms today?*)
- * There are many different types of landforms and ecosystems in the continent of Africa. (*How many different types of ecosystems are in North America?*)
- * African countries have capital cities that contain institutions such as universities, libraries, and churches of many faiths. (*Compare a capital city of an African country with a capital city in a North American country.*)
- * Many languages are spoken in the countries of Africa. Many of the citizens of different African countries are multi-lingual. (*How many languages can you read, write, understand, or speak?*)
- * A huge range of textiles is available in different areas of Africa, both manufactured at home and imported from other countries and continents. There are many varied clothing styles. (*How many types of clothing can you*

find in North America? Do you dress in the same way as your mother, father, or your neighbor?)

- * There are many types of foods eaten by the many different peoples in Africa. (*How many types of food do we eat in North America today? How much of your food is homegrown, imported, or exported? How much food in Africa is homegrown, imported, or exported?*)

Words and Education

The words you use in the classroom and in your lives are very powerful and have the potential to effect your students' world view. Some words to avoid (in Roman type) and suggested alternatives (in *italic type*) are:

Avoid

Try

tribe

people

Why: Using the word tribe, when talking about African people, has a negative connotation, similar to the word "savage."

pagan

*traditional religion
or traditional beliefs*

Why: Pagan is a word used to label people with beliefs about God and spirituality that may differ from our own. However, as a nation, we have become very aware of our basic rights to our own personal religious beliefs and the rights of others.

superstition or myth

legend or story

Why: Myth implies that the story is an untruth or the creation of a superstitious (as opposed to scientific) mind. These two words invalidate important stories that are often very significant to people's world view.

(un)civilized or savage

*person, individual,
or human being*

Why: These words invalidate a person's individuality and his or her right to exist. They label people as less than human.

slave

*enslaved individual,
or enslaved African*

Why: *Enslaved African* helps to remind us that we are talking not about a slave (property) but about a thinking, feeling human being who is linked to all of us through our shared humanity. Slavery was inflicted upon individuals; it was not a choice to become a slave.

Section 1: Art for the Individual

Introduction

Life Expressions is made up of three sections that reflect the three gallery themes at the Seattle Art Museum: Art for the Individual, Art for the Community, and Art for Gods and Spirits. Each section begins with an introduction.

In Art for the Individual, art made for specific persons is examined. We begin by looking at art for the ruler of the people of the ancient Kingdom of Benin (**Bronze Plaque**). The plaque tells us about a specific ruler, an accomplishment of his reign, his accoutrements, and his closest attendants. The **Throne of a Kom Queen** is a sculptural representation of a matriarch who is responsible for the founding of the Kom nation. In the form of the throne, past leaders reign over the presiding rulers of the Kom people, and recall their history of the nation.

A *Ma Kpon* (gameboard) is used by people to play *wari*, a game that has been enjoyed in parts of Africa for centuries. It is played by children and adults. The *Wunkirmian* (feast-making spoon) is similar to a trophy, given to a woman as an acknowledgment of her generosity and hospitality.

The next three lessons focus on **textiles** (*adire*, *adinkra*, and *kente* cloths). Students discuss the cloth for everyday use, for occasions of mourning, and for royalty. They participate in art activities to see how symbols are used for aesthetic purposes as well as to convey thoughts and proverbs to others.

In Art for the Individual, we discuss materials, technology, and the manufacture of textiles, as well as aesthetics and the use and meaning of symbolism. In later sections, we build upon these concepts as we talk about interaction between individuals and groups of people with their ancestors, animals (Art for the Community), and helpers from the spirit world (Art for Gods and Spirits).

Art for the Individual examines how art conveys ideas about an individual's role in society and his or her relationship to others.

Section 1: Art for the Individual

In this section, we begin with a set of questions. These questions are followed by a lesson plan, questions and answers, and activities. The introductory questions (below) may be used as evaluation at the end of the lesson. The questions (A) relate to the art objects (B).

A. Introductory/Evaluation Questions

- Lesson 1. Are there kings in Africa?
- Lesson 2. Are there queens in Africa?
- Lesson 3. What kind of games might children play in Africa?
- Lesson 4. What types of clothes do people wear in Africa?
- Lesson 5. What types of clothes do people wear in Africa?
- Lesson 6. What types of clothes do people wear in Africa?
- Lesson 7. What kinds of foods are eaten in Africa?

B. West African Art Objects Examined to Answer the Above Questions

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Lesson 1. Benin, Nigeria | Oba (oh-bah) with Attendants,
Bronze Plaque |
| Lesson 2. Kom, Cameroon | Throne of a Kom Queen |
| Lesson 3. Dan, Liberia | <i>Ma Kpon</i> (mah'-kah-pon) (Gameboard) |
| Lesson 4. Yoruba, Nigeria | <i>Adire</i> Cloth (ah-dear'-ay) |
| Lesson 5. Asante, Ghana | <i>Adinkra</i> Cloth (ah-deank-rah) |
| Lesson 6. Asante, Ghana | <i>Kente</i> Cloth (ken-teh) |
| Lesson 7. Dan, Liberia | <i>Wunkirmian</i> (woo-kee-leh-mahn)
(Feast-Making Spoon) |

Lesson 1: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque

Benin, Nigeria (1550-1650)

Were there/are there kings in Africa?
Are there kingdoms in Africa?
How far back do those kingdoms go in time?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Section 1: 3

Handout 1: Oba Akenzua II in Procession

Benin, Nigeria



The **oba** is the spiritual and political leader of the people. The photo shows Oba (oh-bah) Akenzua II (ah-ken-zoo-ah) in procession. He is wearing a high collar, shirt, and crown made of coral beads.

Oba Ewuare (eeh-wahr-ay'), who reigned in 1440, was the first ruler to use coral. He is said to have gone to Olokun (oh-loh-kun), the god of the sea, to obtain coral for his use.

Photograph by William Fagg, taken in Benin (beh-nee') City, Nigeria, 1958, copyright the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

Lesson 1: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque

Benin, Nigeria (1550-1650)

Summary of the Lesson

Students discuss the Oba of Benin and rulers of Africa, view a handout of the plaque, discuss the role of the oba in Benin and the role of the specific court personages as portrayed in the plaque. Students participate in an art activity.

- GOAL** Students will discuss the bronze plaque to see how history is recorded and documented in Benin art.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will discuss kings and kingdoms in Africa.
 2. Students will analyze, identify, and describe items and personages on the plaque from Benin.
 3. Students will discuss how history is recorded in art.
 4. Students will draw parallels with their own lives and the plaque from Benin.
- TIME** 50 minutes
- METHODS**
1. Discussion
 2. Question and answer period
 3. Creative art projects
 4. Research
- MATERIALS** Slide 1, projector and screen
Magazines, paper, scissors, glue sticks, markers or crayons
- HANDOUTS**
- 1: Oba Akenzua II in Procession
 - 2: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque
 - 3: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque (detail)
 - 4: Chief Dancing with an Eben

Section 1: 5

BACKGROUND

S L I D E 1

This plaque was made for the royal family who presided over the ancient Kingdom of Benin, and illustrates an individual oba (Handout 2). The oba (oh-bah) is the spiritual and political leader of his people of Nigeria (Handout 1). The oba possesses all spiritual power and authority, is regarded as king of the living and the dead, and is considered divine. He is thought to be the reincarnation of an earlier ruler, and is rarely seen, which increases the mystery surrounding him. These beliefs are similar to those held by the ancient Egyptian people about their pharaohs.²

According to oral history, the people of the Kingdom of Benin³ originally came from Egypt many hundreds of years ago and settled in West Africa. They lived under a monarch who had the title of Ogo (oh-geeh-so) until the year 1300 when the first oba became the ruler of the people.⁴

Since the mid-14th century up to the present, the reigning oba (see photo 1:4) has lived in a special palace. The palace is a city in itself, surrounded by the capital city of Benin. The present oba presides over the city of Benin and still wields influence as a religious leader for over 60,000 Edo people. The palace is made up of apartments and houses where the oba lives with his family, royal assistants, artists, historians, musicians, and other people who support and maintain his reign. The oba is surrounded by splendid art. His collection includes portrait heads, bronze plaques, and leopards and other animals cast in bronze. Masks, gongs, ivory pendants, coral beadwork, holy altars, weavings, and carved tusks are also part of his vast collection. The oba does not show himself to the public very often, and he is never spoken to directly by the public, but uses a go-between for communication. Contact requires as many as three go-betweens, as well as an

² Pharaoh: a king of ancient Egypt.

³ The Kingdom of Benin is an early empire. Its geographic range rests in the humid forest of southwest Nigeria. It is not to be confused with the Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey) which lies to the west of Nigeria.

⁴ The reigning Ogo was impeached by the ruling chiefs. The ruler put in power to replace the Ogo was unpopular. The chiefs then sent word to Ife (ee-feh), a city about 100 miles northwest of the City of Benin, asking for a monarch. A Yoruba prince named Oranmiyan (or'-ah-min-yah) came and married Erinmwide (ehr-ehn-wee'-deh). Their son Eweka became the first oba (the ruler of the Kingdom of Benin).

understanding of language and the special etiquette necessary to be in the presence of the oba.

The oba's reception court (located in the palace interior) was constructed with wooden pillars covered with as many as 1,200 bronze plaques, all similar to this one. These plaques illustrate the history of individual obas. They serve as memorials to obas, commissioned to commemorate great deeds and act as narratives. Compare them to commemorative paintings made to honor the Queen of England. Plaques were referred to during formal ceremonies and consulted by palace officials, thus serving as illustrations for the kingdom's oral historians.

Long ago, these plaques were seen only by the oba and his historians who lived in the palace. Today, some plaques rest inside the royal palace while others are now in museums. Even though this item is no longer solely a part of the oba's private collection of art, the plaque still expresses the oba's grandeur, history, and regalia in a manner we can appreciate more than 400 years later.

The rectangular bronze plaque in this slide shows a large central figure who represents the oba. He wears royal regalia and carries a staff with rattling bells. He holds an *eben* (e'-behn), an official kind of sword used only for ritual purposes. It is used during ceremonial dancing; its form derives from a large fan. (Handout 4 shows a contemporary chief performing a ritual dance with an *eben*.) The oba's rank is symbolically defined by his size and placement on the plaque, his material wealth, and the support of the many individuals around him. The oba is flanked by a soldier on the left and a musician with a harp on the right.

This plaque represents a specific oba who ruled the powerful Kingdom of Benin in the 15th to 16th century (Handout 2). This plaque may depict Oba Esigie (eh-see'-gee) who did a great deal to establish trade with the Europeans, and had a group of Portuguese soldiers in his army. An armed Portuguese man is on the left. Esigie had the help of a small Portuguese military attachment in his war against the Attah of Idah (the pre-eminent ruler of the Igala [ee-ga-la] people) in 1515. Author Paula Ben-Amos⁵ suggests another possibility. She thinks this may represent Oba Ewuakpe (ee-wah-peh), who is remembered as a weak ruler. He comforted himself by listening to harp music; this may be the reason a harp player appears on this plaque.

Benin exists today as a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Artists, weavers, musicians and bronzesmiths still create art there today, but instead of working solely for the oba they sell their work to tourists and the local people in their homelands as well as exporting it to other nations.

⁵ Paula Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980).

DISCUSSION

Why is the oba so important?

The oba is the king of both the living world and the land of the dead. In ancient Egypt, the pharaohs were considered divine, and were thought to be the reincarnations of earlier pharaohs. This same belief is also true for the Oba of Benin.

If the oba lives in a building inside a city-like palace, inside the larger city of Benin, inside his greater kingdom, do you think the people see him very often? What other people of high status are sometimes inaccessible or hard to reach? Why?

The oba is not often seen by the public. He is never spoken to directly but uses a go-between for communication. Royalty, the President of the United States, and other leaders of higher office are protective of themselves and their privacy, and sometimes limit their public contact.

Look at the figures on the plaque (Handout 2). What do they hold, and what do they wear?

The oba is surrounded by two shield bearers, a sword bearer, an offering figure, and a harp player. They wear helmets and shields.

Describe the oba as he appears on the plaque.

The oba has broad cuffs around his wrist, a tooth necklace, and a helmet. He holds an eben.

All chiefs of Benin (of which there are several hundred) have the right to have the eben carried in front of them and to use it in the ceremonial dance. At the height of the ceremony, the oba would come down and perform the homage dance, which included throwing the eben and spinning it high into the air. Though the eben was never used in battle, it has the status of "official sword."

One of the men is Portuguese. How does he appear different from the other attendants?

He is on the left. His helmet shape is distinctly "Portuguese" in style, he is the only one in shoes, and he has a gun.

(Guns were brought into many areas of the world by Europeans, in this case, the Portuguese.)

A NOTE TO TEACHERS: YOU MAY WISH TO RESEARCH TRADE ROUTES WITH AFRICA WITH REGARD TO THIS LESSON (PORTUGAL, ENGLAND, GERMANY, ASIA, THE CARIBBEAN, NORTH AMERICA).

The two figures shielding the oba are a common grouping in Benin plaques. What could be the function of the two people who are so close to the oba?

The figures protect the Oba. It is possible that these figures represent the *edaiken* (eh-dah-kehn) (the heir to the throne) and the *ezomo* (eh-zo-mo) (the war chief responsible for the oba's army). These three—the oba, *edaiken*, and *ezomo*—are often depicted together in plaques.

Other figures present are a musician with an instrument (upper right hand), and an ekpokin (eh po' kehn) carrier (the small figure, upper left). An ekpokin is a small box of offerings for the oba. Notice the haircut on the figure on the upper left (Handout 3).

The hair of the man has been cut into a special style. It is similar to some of the popular hairstyles we see today, called fades.

Look at the composition in Handout 2. Look at the posture of the people. Describe this.

The people are all lined up. Their faces appear serene. Their stance, facial features, and attitude seem to say these people are detached, in control, strong, and unwavering.

Why do you think the people in this plaque are portrayed this way?

The artist may have been trying to convey the solid nature of the oba and his court. This could give a person confidence in the oba, a leader of great strength and honor.

How do we know what our leaders look like today?

We know by the use of photographs and other media.

Long ago, in the 16th century, how did different people know about their political and spiritual leaders?

In England painters created pictures of kings. In Nigeria, the bronze plaque was created. Stories (oral traditions) were created, and aspects of the person's traits were conveyed in songs, stories, paintings, and works such as the bronze plaque.

What do you use today to know and remember the history of your people, your family?

Today we use photographs, home movies or videos, report cards and other memorabilia, and scrapbooks to document our lives. We can also make paintings or bronze plaques, if we so choose.

ACTIVITIES

Find a way to convey an image of your family, your community, or your history using pictures you create or by making picture collages from magazine images.

MATERIALS Magazines with many pictures of people
Scissors, glue sticks, markers or crayons, paper

1. Oral and Visual History

Create picture books, paintings, and collages that describe an important person in your life, your family, or someone you admire. Convey their position in society, in your life, in home, and their importance by:

- How you describe them in your drawing or collage
- The things that surround them in your collage and drawing (as the artist has done on this plaque).

2. Time Capsule

Make a time capsule reflecting your life or an important series of events in our history. Students could create a large-scale mural reflecting a spiritual or political leader's work.

Can you think of things that would help you to remember history if it was not written?

The symbols in plaques or other artwork may contain metaphors or symbols to illustrate points of fact. Memories, songs, and stories can commemorate important events.

3. At the Library: Timeline

What else was happening in the world in the year 1515? Research what was happening in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and other kingdoms of Africa during the time this plaque was made.

4. Research/Mural

Discuss the ways people are remembered and live on through their spoken words in many cultures. Spiritual and political leaders are frequently quoted from recordings (video, film, tape recordings) or transcriptions of their oral presentations (newspaper articles, books, sacred texts). Research newspapers, videotapes, films, and written speeches of the following world leaders:

Martin Luther King, Jr. (especially his "I have a dream" speech)
John Fitzgerald Kennedy (inaugural address)
Pope John Paul II
Mother Teresa
The Dalai Lama
Mahatma Gandhi
Abraham Lincoln (Gettysburg address)

What do you learn about these leaders from their words?

Compare the philosophies of these leaders with their portraits.

Are they pictured in any manner or with any objects that may allude to their famous words? When people look at their images, do they recall their famous words? Compare this to the oba's bronze plaque.

Make a mural of political or spiritual leaders of your choice, showing them surrounded by symbols representing their status, their work, their reputation, and their strength.

Be a leader—write an essay on a contemporary social or environmental issue. Use creative problem-solving skills to offer solutions. Create a slogan and logo for your campaign. Describe how you want to be remembered as a leader, and how you wish people to think of you in 50 years' time.

5. Metalwork and Memories

Brass was a prized material in the Kingdom of Benin, and was used to make portrait sculptures (such as bronze heads) and plaques like the one examined in this lesson. Brass and bronze were substances possessed solely by the oba and owned by others only with his permission. It is not only important to note that the

material was available, but that the people had the knowledge and technology to work the material, in this case, by using the method of lost-wax casting.⁶

Compare this brass casting to the pictures on metal coins and to commemorative sculptures made from metal.

How far back does our memory of leaders go? Do you remember any leaders that have their faces printed on our coins like the penny, nickel, quarter, half-dollar? Why do leaders desire to be remembered? Are there any bronze or metal portraits of people in Seattle?

6. Need More to Do?

Research the following questions:

Is the oba still a leader in Nigeria?

Yes. The current oba is the 39th ruler since the first oba became ruler of the kingdom. He is a direct descendant of the first oba, and his name is Oba Erediauwu (ehr-eh-dee-ah-wah), a graduate of King's College, of Cambridge, England.

Research the arrival of Europeans to the Kingdom of Benin. What did the Portuguese want from Benin? What did the oba want from the Portuguese? How is this relevant to the slave trade?

⁶ In this technique, wax was modeled over a shaped clay core. Skillful handling of the wax enabled the artist to include fine surface details. After modeling, wax extensions, or sprues, were added to provide space for pour channels and gas vents. The entire object was placed in a layered mold of fine to coarse clays. It was then heated by the addition of molten metal. The metal replaced the "lost wax." After cooling, the mold was broken to release the metal object creating unique pieces rather than a series of identical objects. Bryna Freyer, *Royal Benin Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), p. 13.

Handout 2: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque

Benin, Nigeria



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 1: 13

Handout 3: Oba with Attendants, Bronze Plaque (detail)

Benin, Nigeria

Notice the hair design on the oba's attendant who appears in the upper left-hand corner of this plaque from the 16th century. The hair appears carved, something like a "fade"⁷ with designs carved into it.



Seattle Art Museum photograph

⁷ A fade is the name for a hairstyle popular among many people in the United States today. It is a short, block-style cut, often carved with designs, names, or emblems. Some famous athletes wear their hair this way, as do many young people.

Section 1: 15

Handout 4: Chief Dancing with an *Eben*

A senior chief raises an *eben* and dances in honor of the oba. *Can you see how the eben is similar to the one on the bronze plaque from many centuries ago?*



Photograph by William Fagg, 1958, copyright The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

Section 1: 17

Lesson 2: Throne of a Kom Queen

Kom, Cameroon

Were there queen mothers in Africa?
Are there queen mothers elsewhere in the world?
What is the role of male/female cooperation in royal families?

Handout 5: Queen Nefertiti



A portrait of Queen Nefertiti (1340 B.C.) from the Egyptian Museum, Berlin, Germany, Vanni/Art Resource, New York.

Section 1: 20

Lesson 2: Throne of a Kom Queen

Kom, Cameroon

Summary of the Lesson

Students discuss queen mothers of West Africa and Egypt. Students look at a slide of a throne and discuss its use and how it functions to convey family lineage, the founding of a nation, and history to others.

- GOAL** Students will understand the role of queen mothers and the use of a throne in order to recognize the throne as a visual expression of family lineage and a record of the history of a people.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will discuss queen mothers of West Africa and Egypt.
 2. Students will discuss the meaning of a throne, and learn how it represents family support, the cooperative relationship of male and female, and family lineage to others.
 3. Students will discuss reasons for representing history in art objects.
- TIME** 45 minutes
- METHODS**
1. Discussion
 2. Creative art projects
 3. Descriptive and creative writing
- MATERIALS**
- Slides 2 and 3, projector and screen
Hair ribbons, bows, beads, barrettes, hairbrushes, and combs
Paper and pens or pencils
"Found art" materials to create a throne facsimile
- HANDOUTS**
- 5: Queen Nefertiti
 - 6: Afo-A-Kom with Two Companions
 - 7: Throne of Queen Bo
 - 8: Throne of Afo-A-Kom

Section 1: 21

BACKGROUND

S
L
I
D
E

2

In the continent of Africa, there have been many kingdoms ruled by powerful, influential, and supreme rulers. For example, the royal families of the Asante people of Ghana and the Yoruba people of Nigeria continue to exert power and influence today. In ancient Egypt, a very famous monarch was the Queen Mother Nefertiti (neh-fer-tee-tee), the Queen of Egypt in the early 14th century B.C. (see Handout 5). Nefertiti reigned alongside her husband, Akhenaton (ah-keh-nah-ten).

Today in the Kom Kingdom of Cameroon, the fon is the supreme ruler. He is the living incarnation of a line of rulers, which in turn gives him the right to rule his people. The Kom people are part of matrilineal society. This means the fon (a male) is chosen from female bloodlines. The fon is revered and believed to be semi-divine. He mediates between the world of the living and the dead. When the Kom moved to Laikom (see *The Story of the Founding of Laikom*), the first dynasty was founded by a woman named Queen Mother Bo.⁸ The son of one of Bo's daughters was the first fon, Jina. Since the founding of Laikom, all fons are descendants of the matriarch, Queen Bo.

The fon's family lineage and the memories about his ancestors are shown in the throne and are an important part of the throne. The image of his ancestor is carved into the throne. In this example, a royal woman fused with the seat stands behind it. When presiding over his people, the fon, seated on the throne, is overshadowed, supported, and watched over by his ancestor who is memorialized in wood. Showing the ancestor (who was the original founder of the kingdom) demonstrates to others that the present fon is the true living descendant, and therefore has the right to be the reigning monarch (chief or king) of the people. Even though the fon is the ruler, his female relative (the queen mother) is in charge of the intricate relations of the palace home.

To the people of Laikom, the living and dead exist in an interdependent way. The ancestors (those who are deceased) are the intermediaries between those who are living and God. Also, the ancestors have the potential and the power to influence life. Because of this, and because ancestors are revered, the relationship with ancestors must remain on positive terms. Respectful acknowledgment of the ancestors helps to ensure a continued positive relationship between the ancestors and the living.

⁸ Queen mother is a term meaning a woman with a high social status and power. Her advice and wisdom are sought after by people: she wields power in society, and is awarded great respect in her community.

The Story of the Founding of Laikom (*The Story of Queen Bo*)
Adapted from a story transcribed by Paul Feretti⁹

A long time ago, the Kom people left Ndobbo (un'-do-bo), which was their home situated on the Mbam (un'-bahm) River. They went to Bamessi. After awhile, a great difficulty befell the people. They understood that they needed to find a new place to live. Their leader, the fon of the Kom people, told them to watch for the track of a python and follow it. This would be their sign.

One day, the track of the python appeared, and the Kom people, led by Bo, followed it. They settled first at Jottin and then later at Ajung. Eventually, the track led Bo and the people to Laikom, where the python track that they were following disappeared into the ground.

Bo became known as the founder of Laikom and all rulers descend from her because she led her people to their new homeland.¹⁰ The sacred spot where the track of the python disappeared into the ground is still in the palace compound today.

Royal throne figures such as this one (Handout 7) have their hands, feet, and face sheathed in copper, a symbol of prestige. The rest of the body is covered with beads. Beads had value and were a form of currency. Like money today, they were traded for goods and services. The beads were used to decorate throne figures, but, during hard times, they were taken off and spent. The beads on this figure of the queen mother were removed and placed on a more recent ancestor figure memorialized in another throne. This ancestor figure is known as the **Afo-A-Kom** (Handout 8). The Afo-A-Kom represents all of the fons who have died and all of the power involved in being a fon.

The queen's hands are formed in a gesture of salutation and respect. She is showing her respect to her ancestors and to the fon. In turn, respect shown to the ancestral spirits is of the kind of respect given to the living elders. Her salutation, respect, and humility acknowledge the fon as ruler. Her cupped hands also

⁹ Paul Feretti, *Afo-A-Kom, A Sacred Art of Cameroon* (New York: Okpaku Press, 1975).

¹⁰ **The fons of Kom:** Dynasty of Bo (known as the *nafon* or queen mother); Jina; Kumanbong; Kwo; Nkwain; Tufon 1830-55; Kemeng 1855-65; Yu 1865-1912; Nggam 1912-26; Ndi 1926-54; Loh'-oh 1954-66; Nsom Nwe 1964-74; [Unknown] 1974-89, Yibain 1989-present. Ibid.

represent the act of offering a kola nut to the fon. Presenting a kola nut is a customary gesture of welcome, hospitality, and respect.

Throne figures (Handout 6) are made in small groupings of three (male and female). Queen Bo's mate is now in the Frankfurt Museum. He and Queen Bo were carved for the Kom people to remind them of their history, lineage, and migration to Laikom. The thrones show us that the cooperation between men and women is important.

DISCUSSION

In ancient Egypt, and in recent times in Cameroon, male and female rulers worked together in the monarchy. Can you think of another example of this?

In England, Queen Elizabeth's mother is the queen mother of her people. In recent political systems, the president, or ruler of a nation, is often supported by his or her spouse.

(Please give examples of how rulers and their spouses show support and unity to their nations.)

Look at the handout of the throne. Describe the queen's hairstyle, face, necklace, and body. What adjectives can you use to describe her?

You could say she is strong, since she has firm, muscular legs. Her hair is made up in a flawless, dignified style. She has perfect posture and a confident demeanor. Her beaded necklace is a sign of wealth.

Describe as many details as possible. Why do you think the artist originally covered her body with beads and covered her face and hands with copper?

We know copper and beads are prestigious, valuable materials. The artist used them to beautify and honor her image.

Can you think of an example of use of special jewelry or prestigious materials in Western art? Could this be similar to the Afo-A-Kom wearing the beads from the Queen Bo throne? How is this like family heirlooms?

Crown jewels (in England, for example) are considered the property of the country, but they are used by the royal family. A king of England may wear a crown, but when the king dies his successor wears the same jeweled crown.

What does her hand gesture say to you? How do we know this person is important?

This is a sign of salutation, a sign of respect to others. We know she is significant because she is portrayed on a throne as the royal leader who brought the people to their homeland. Also, the associated oral traditions remind us of her fame.

Notice where the throne and the legs are joined.

The seat of the throne appears to be joined to her, as a ruler is joined to his past (his ancestors).

Do you think the queen mother looks important? Do you think she was made in a way that helps people remember their history?

(This is a subjective question. Prompt your students to describe how the artist made her look important to the people viewing her.)

Imagine sitting on the throne. What does it feel like to be the son? What would it be like to have your mother, or someone you respected and admired, behind you all of the time? What would it feel like to have them watching you, hearing all you say and witnessing all that you do? Would you do a better job?

(The answers from your students will vary. You may wish to discuss the feelings the students would have in this circumstance, or the feelings the throne would evoke in their peers.)

In the United States and in other countries, statues are created to memorialize events or people important to the country's history. Think of statues in the United States, in Seattle.

What do these statues reveal about our heritage, the founding of our nation? Can you make comparisons with "the father of our country" (George Washington) and Queen Bo of the Kom? How are they both memorialized? Do our present rulers ally themselves with George Washington or Abraham Lincoln? Is this similar to how rulers of the Kom ally themselves with former, deceased rulers?

Both the people of the United States and the Kom people create sculptures and monuments to deceased leaders. Wealth is considered a prestigious quality; George Washington's image is on U.S. currency, and Bo was once covered with beads, which at one time were a form of currency. Political leaders like to draw analogies between themselves and previous popular rulers. In the United States,

political candidates may align themselves with respected deceased leaders such as John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Lincoln, as leaders in Laikom ally themselves with respected leaders of the past such as the Afo-A-Kom and Queen Bo.

ACTIVITIES

1. Hairstyles

Look at Queen Bo's and Queen Nefertiti's hairstyles. Do they look as if they took a long time to do?

Research hairstyles from the past and the present. Study the book *Africa Adorned* by Angela Fisher (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1984). Have people always tried to make their hair look fancy? What could you do to your hair to make it look important? What messages do we convey to others by how we wear our clothing and hair? Draw your impressions of Queen Bo. Does she possess any characteristics that you wish to emulate?

Study Queen Bo's hair. Create regal hairstyles with adornments in class. Use fancy ribbons, beads, braids, barrettes. Optional: take photographs of your hairstyles and display the pictures in class.

2. The Royal Family

Queen Bo watches over the reigning fon, and she supports him. She also shows people that the man seated in the throne, the ruler, is related to her. This gives him the right to rule.

Kings and queens (husbands and wives) are often pictured together in ancient Egypt and modern England.

Draw your impressions of the male/female relationship in royal and political lineage. Think about how one force complements the other.

3. Art as a Representation of History

Think of an important event in your life. Your goal is to find a way to represent that event in a nonverbal, unwritten way. You must directly describe a person and an event. Your art must also show how that event is relevant to today and to the past. You can use collage, a mural, or sculpture.

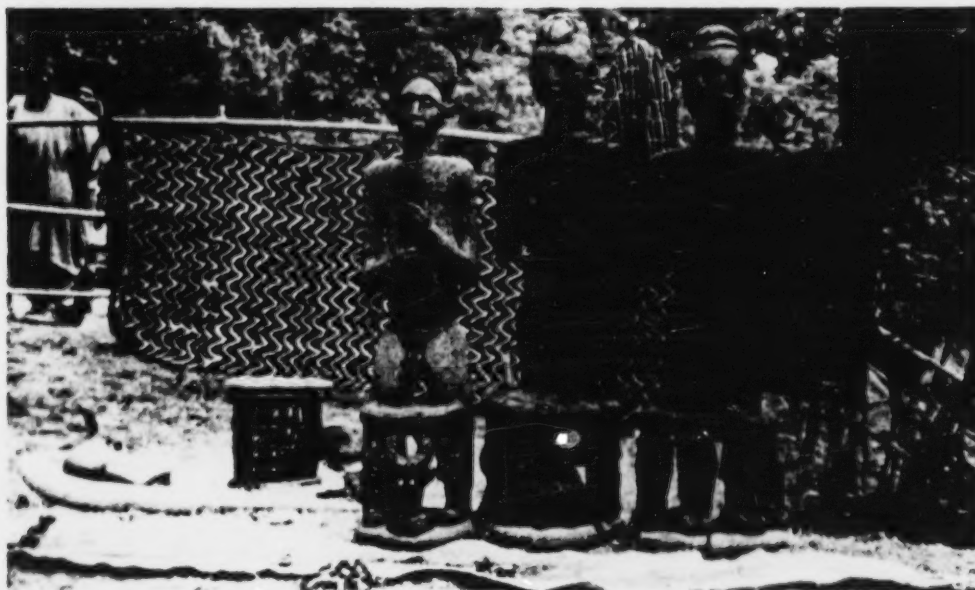
Discuss why thrones refer to specific people in Laikom, and what they mean for the fon's right to rule today.

Design a throne or ceremonial chair using found objects. This could be made by using cardboard boxes (or an existing chair) decorated with photos of world leaders, family elders, objects of prestige (coins, imitation jewelry) or decorative elements (glitter, foil, or bright fluorescent paint). What would symbolize a seat of wisdom or a ceremonial throne to you? What would make you feel honored and important? What elements could be added to your throne to give it a sense of history and represent a place to make important decisions?

Handout 6: Afo-A-Kom with Two Companions

Kom, Cameroon

The Afo-A-Kom throne figure (at left) is shown with his two companions. They are encircled with items for royalty: python skin, calabash gourd, and a blue-and-white display cloth. These items were situated in a guarded enclosure near the palace of Laikom.



Photograph by Tamara Northern taken in 1974 in the palace at Laikom in Tamara Northern, *The Art of Cameroon*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1984), p. 95.

Section 1: 29

Handout 7: Throne of Queen Bo

Kom, Cameroon

Please notice the:

Hairstyle

(Well-groomed hair is a sign of dignity and sophistication)

Expression

(of composure, support)

Beaded Necklace

(Beads are prestigious. At one time she was fully covered in beads.)

Folded Hands

(in salutation or in presentation of a kola nut for the fon)

Seat of the Throne

(imagine sitting there)

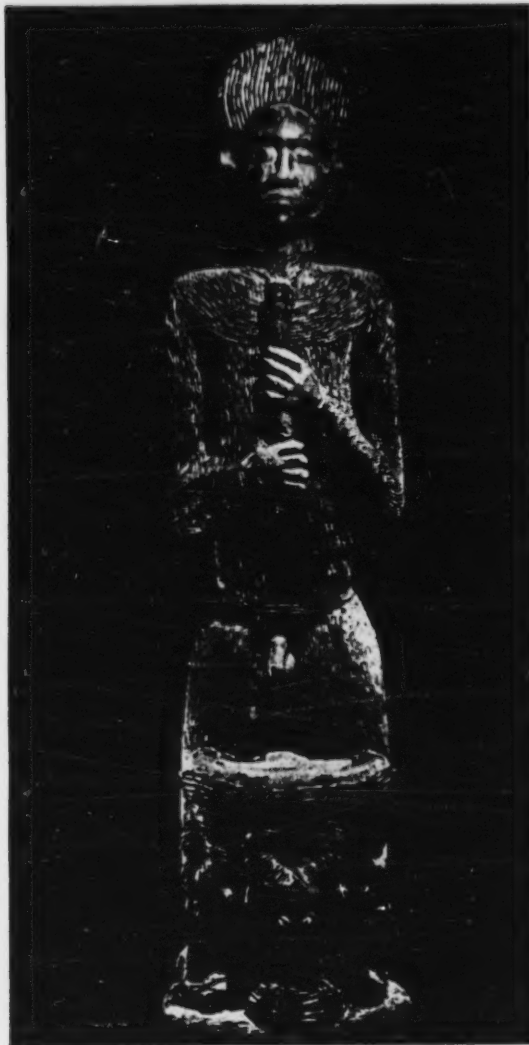
Seattle Art Museum photograph



Section 1: 31

Handout 8: Throne of Afo-A-Kom

Kom, Cameroon



This detail shows the Afo-A-Kom fully beaded. Compare this to the throne of Queen Bo to see how she would have looked before her beads were removed.

Photograph by James Blair, courtesy of *National Geographic Magazine*, p. 140, in William S. Ellis and James Blair, "The Afo-A-Kom: A Sacred Symbol Comes Home," *National Geographic Magazine* (July 1974).

Section 1: 33

Lesson 3: *Ma Kpon* (Gameboard)

Dan, Liberia, Ivory Coast

What kinds of games do children play in Africa?
What games might you play with someone in Africa?

Handout 9: Two Maasai Men Playing Wari

Two Maasai men playing *wari* (on a *ma kpon*) outdoors. This game is played in many areas of the world and has widespread use throughout the continent of Africa.



Games of the World: How to Make Them, How to Play Them, and How They Came to Be (Zurich: Swiss Committee for UNICEF, 1982), p. 23.

Section 1: 36

Lesson 3: *Ma Kpon* (Gameboard)

Dan, Liberia, Ivory Coast

Summary of the Lesson

Students discuss a game played in areas of Africa, view a slide of a gameboard from Liberia, discuss its use and design, and participate in an art activity.

- GOAL** Students will study the use of a gameboard in order to understand how it functions as an art object and provides a way of sharing time with friends or family. Students will recognize the use of surface embellishment to see how art beautifies everyday objects.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will analyze decoration on an everyday object
 2. Students will recognize how culturally important mores are reinforced in the game: social interaction, speed, strategy, and skill.
- TIME** One hour
- METHODS**
1. Observation and discussion
 2. Identification and analysis
 3. Creative art projects
- MATERIALS** Slide 4, projector and screen
Paper, markers, pictures (animals, or people with admirable traits)
- For K-3 level: egg cartons, paper cups, markers, paints, paintbrushes
- HANDOUTS**
- 9: Two Maasai Men Playing *Wari*
 - 10: How to Make Your Own *Ma Kpon* (Gameboard)
 - 11: Paper Gameboard
 - 12: Instructions for Playing the Game
 - 13: Two Girls Playing *Wari*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Section 1: 37

BACKGROUND

SLIDE

4

The Liberian board game of *mano* (known elsewhere in Africa as *mankala*,¹¹ *ayo*, or *wari* [wah-re]) is an intense game of strategy that involves planning, counting, quick maneuvers, and bluffing. This example is one manifestation of the *ma kpon* (mah'-kah-pon), the gameboard, that always has twelve cups in two rows of six (Handout 9).

In simple terms, *wari* can be explained as a game involving seeds or pebbles placed four per hole in each of the twelve holes (four per hole) on the gameboard. Players take opposite sides of the gameboard. They each take turns moving their seeds around the board. When a turn ends at a hole that has one or two seeds, the player takes them. The player who takes the most seeds wins the game (Handout 12).

When people want to play but have no gameboard, they dig twelve small holes in the ground to make their gameboard, and they gather seeds or pebbles to make their game pieces. Everyone plays this game—the elders, men, women, boys and girls. It is often played during family and group get-togethers (Handouts 10 and 11).

This type of game has been played for thousands of years in Africa as well as in ancient Egypt. Boards have been found carved into the stone of the Pyramid of Cheops and at the temples at Luxor and Karnak. The game is still played today (Handout 13).

TEACHERS: ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO FIND THESE PLACES ON A MAP.

The game spread across the African continent and into Asia long ago. In more recent times, enslaved African people brought this game (along with their culture, beliefs, music, and art) to Surinam, the West Indies, and the Americas.

DISCUSSION

Describe the gameboard from Liberia. What animal is represented?

This gameboard is made of wood and has a long rectangular body, with twelve round cups on its back. They are arranged in two rows of six.

¹¹ *Mankala* is from the Arabic verb *naqala*, which means "to move something about."

There is a ram's head at one end of the board and a cup at the opposite end to hold the game pieces. The gameboard is decorated with designs on the ram's body.

Look at the slide of the gameboard. Notice the designs on the side of it. How does the artist use the design?

The artist uses the designs to decorate the gameboard; the use of geometric motifs adds visual appeal.

The ram is thought to possess spiritual power that can be used by people for constructive goals. Figures of rams (some dating as far back as 9000 B.C.) have been found in Egypt, Liberia, Carthage, Chad, Nigeria, and other areas of the African continent.

What ram qualities might be relevant to this game?

The ram has many good qualities. It is a sure-footed animal. Rams are careful in their actions but move quickly and safely through many types of terrain. Rams are strong and smart. It is said that a ram is as brave as a human.

When you look at the gameboard, what associations come to mind?

One could imagine that the designs on the sides of the board are the spine, shoulders, hips, and tailbone of the animal. One might think the gameboard looks like a ram and is therefore showing a relationship to the natural world or to the symbolic meaning of a ram.

How are the ram's many good traits relevant to this game?

The game of wari requires fast reflexes and intelligence. The ram has these qualities and more. It is brave and strong, but it is also cautious. A skillful player has these qualities too.

What else can we say about the gameboard?

We could say that the gameboard is fun to play with and beautiful to use when sharing time with others.

Does this game encourage a healthy spirit of competition? How do you think this game teaches strategic thinking?

This game helps players develop competitive skills. By playing wari, one

learns how to use strategies to outsmart the other player. A person must think about and anticipate the other player's moves in order to win the game, something like the strategy required in a game of chess.

In the United States, we often separate what is beautiful from what is functional. Art, math, reading, science, and religion are seen as separate subjects. In the Dan culture of Liberia as well as other cultures, this separation between concepts does not exist. Spirit, function, and aesthetics are all part of an art object.

ACTIVITIES

1. Play the Game

See instructions on Handout 12. (Photocopy instructions for students so they can follow the steps of the game.)

TEACHERS MAY WISH TO ADAPT THIS GAME INTO A SIMPLER VERSION FOR K-3 STUDENTS. CHILDREN COULD DECORATE EGG CARTONS.

2. Animal Affinities

Decorate notebooks or folders with pictures of animals (or people) with traits you admire—perhaps speed, strength, intelligence, neatness.

Pick an image that inspires you, that symbolizes a goal, or stimulates your creative spirit. Place it on your desk to help you keep focused in your work.

You may purchase your own *Ma Kpon* gameboard from:

Animal Town
P.O. Box 485
Healdsburg, CA 95448
1-800-445-8642
\$23.50 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling

Handout 10: How to Make Your Own *Ma Kpon* (Gameboard)

Materials

Plastic clay or modeling clay.
Poster paint.

Varnish

Forty-eight small objects, such as coffee beans or dried peas.

Tools

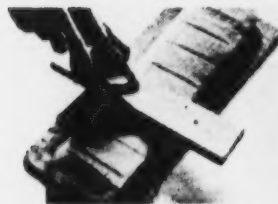
A plywood panel or wooden board (on which the clay can be shaped and dried), rolling pin, knife, ruler, ping-pong ball, and a paintbrush.

How to Make the Game

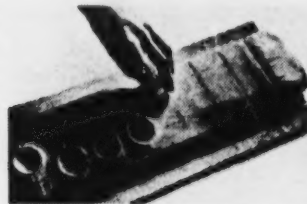
A handsome *wari* board can be made of clay. Using a rolling pin, press the clay into a rectangle of 4 by 16 by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, as shown in photograph 1. Cut away excess clay and score with the knife and the ruler to mark the positions of the holes (photograph 2). Press a ping-pong ball into the soft clay (photograph 3) to make compartments and reservoirs. (Before you begin, prick two holes in the ping-pong ball on opposite sides to prevent suction problems. Make certain that one pin-hole is pressed into the clay and the other is free to "breathe.") Trim the corners of the tablet into a boat-shaped board, as in photograph 4. Let the clay dry and harden for at least a day. A glazed effect can be achieved by painting, then varnishing the hardened clay board.



1. Flatten the clay with a rolling pin into a rectangular slab, 4 by 16 by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.



2. At regular intervals, score the clay surface horizontally, where each hole will be placed.

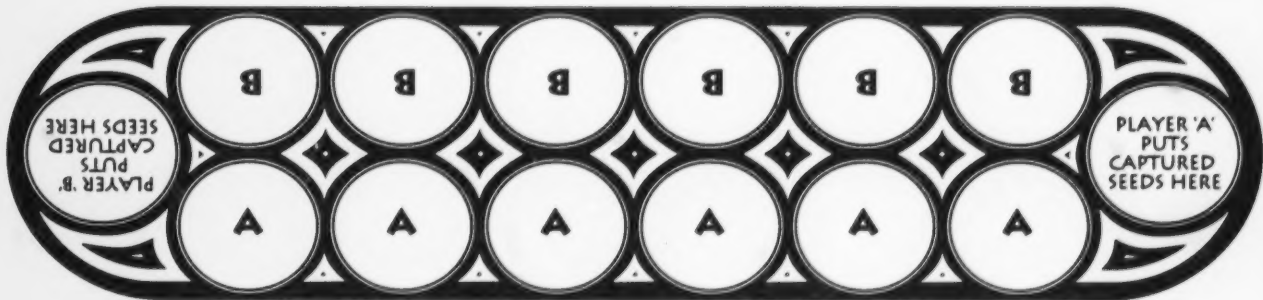


3. Press the perforated ping-pong ball into the clay to form the compartments and reservoirs.



4. Trim off the square corners with a knife to make the board oblong, and smooth the edges.

Handout 11: Paper Gameboard



Teachers: Enlarge gameboard for your students.

Drawing courtesy of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 1992.

Section 1: 43

Handout 12: Instructions for Playing the Game

Adapted from an article by Sue-Lockett John, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 1992.

Get out your gameboard and game pieces. You may create a makeshift gameboard outside by scooping out two rows of seven holes in the dirt. You can also use the illustrated board at the back of this page or draw your own. The players sit facing one row of holes, called "houses."

Next, find 48 gamepieces. You may use dried peas or beans, tiny rocks, or small Lego pieces. Whichever you choose, make sure they do not roll easily if you are playing on a paper gameboard.

Put four seeds in each of your six houses. The end houses remain empty for now. You are ready to start.

1. Pick up all of the seeds in one of your houses.
2. Going counter-clockwise, put one seed into each house that you come to.
3. When you put down the last seed, pick up all of the seeds of that house (this will be five seeds: the one you just put in and the four already there).
4. Continue in the same direction, putting a seed in each house. Skip the end houses. Each time you put the last seed into a house, pick up the seeds. Keep going.
5. Some houses will get very full. Others will be empty. When you put your last seed into an empty house, stop.
6. Go to the house across the board from the one where you stopped. Take all the seeds. Put them in the empty house at your far right at the end. These are the seeds you have captured. Keep them until the end of the game.
7. Now your friend starts with step 1 in one of her houses. When your friend gets to step 6, it's your turn again.
8. Take turns until one side of the board is empty and a player can't move any of her seeds far enough to fill any houses on the empty side.
9. The player who has seeds left in her houses adds them to her captured seeds.
10. Whoever ends up with the most seeds wins.

After you have played this game a few times, you may make up new rules to make the game work better for you and your friends. Think about ways you can strategize and plan your moves for the next game you play.

Handout 13: Two Girls Playing Wari



Chisula and Michelle Harris play *wari* in Seattle.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer photograph, January 1992.

Section 1: 47

Lessons 4, 5, and 6: *Adire, Adinkra, and Kente Cloth*

Yoruba, Nigeria; Asante, Ghana

What types of clothes are worn in Africa?
Are there different clothes for special occasions?
Are there distinctive clothes for certain people?
Do everyday objects appear on clothes?
Can designs on clothes have a symbolic or spiritual meaning?

Handout 14: A Woman Wearing Adire Eleko

Yoruba, Nigeria

A woman wearing *adire eleko* in Ila-Orangun, Nigeria, 1982.



Photograph by John Pemberton III in John Pemberton III, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989), p. 229.

Section 1: 50

Lesson 4: *Adire* Cloth

Yoruba, Nigeria

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of *adire* cloth and discuss the materials and technology used to make the *adire* cloth, the use of the cloth, and the meanings of *adire* designs. Students draw *adire* designs and create designs of their own.

GOAL Students will recognize the materials and technology used in making *adire* cloth in order to understand the meaning of the designs created in *adire*, and how objects in everyday life are used in *adire* for their symbolic, representative, and metaphorical meanings.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will identify the materials and methods used to make *adire*.
2. Students will be able to identify the special qualities of handmade textiles in comparison to machine- and factory-made cloths.
3. Students will understand the relationship between oral traditions (verbal arts) and visual arts.
4. Students will recognize the use of symbols and representations in *adire* and analyze their cultural significance.
5. Students will analyze how plants, animals, and everyday objects are shown in *adire* design.
6. Students will invent ways to represent their own life experiences in cloth designs.

TIME One hour and ten minutes

METHODS

1. Slide observation and discussion
2. Identification and analysis
3. Creative art projects

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Section 1: 51

MATERIALS Slide 5, projector and screen
Muslin fabric, dark blue fabric paint
Paintbrushes, cassava paste substitute
(from Cerulean Blue, Ltd., address on p. 1:56)
Newspapers, clean-up cloth

HANDOUTS 14: A Woman Wearing *Adire Eleko*
15: Nike Davis with Stencil
16: Painting Fabric to Make *Adire*
17: Toyé Ojo Wearing *Adire*
18: Ibadan Dun and Olokun Cloths
19: Samples of *Adire* Cloth Designs
20: More Samples of *Adire* Cloth Designs

BACKGROUND

S
L
I
D
E
5

Nigeria has a vast textile industry. In the large cities of Nigeria, people wear many types of clothing, as people do in other metropolitan areas. Even though there are many types of fabrics and clothing available, *adire* (ah-dear'-ay) cloth remains very popular (Handout 14).

Customarily, *adire* designs have been made on hand-woven cloth. Now, the *adire* designs are made on machine manufactured cloth. For example, cotton shirting (a type of crisp fabric) was first imported into Nigeria in 1910. Yoruba women found they liked to use this cloth for making *adire*.

Nike (Nee-kay) Davis is a Nigerian artist who started the *Nike Center*, an artists' cooperative gallery and educational center in Oshogbo, Nigeria. She describes *adire* this way:

There is a lot of time and care involved in making adire (as is true with any fine work of art.) Adire is an indigo¹²-dyed blue cloth with designs all over its surface, sometimes done freehand or with stencils or printmaking materials (see Handouts 16-20). There are many types of adire: hand-stitched, tie and dye, hand painted, stenciled, and printed.

¹² Indigo: genus *Indigofera* also known as the indigo plant. The fresh green leaves of this plant are pounded with mortar and pestle to produce the blue-black color of indigo dye.

Hand-stitched and tie and dye *adire* is made by making patterns in the cloth by folding, tying, and stitching the fabric. An artist takes a thin strand of thread or raffia and sews and folds the cloth. The folds and stitches resist the indigo dye, and create patterns when the cloth is dry and the stitching is removed. Many threads are used in the stitching of *adire*. After dyeing, some threads are inadvertently left on the cloth. This adds to the texture and design of the *adire*.

The hand-painted cloth is made by painting cassava paste on the cloth with a brush, stick, feather, or other implement.¹³ The paste is painted on the cloth in the design of the artist's choice (Handout 16). An artist draws an *adire* one small section at a time, taking the cloth out in the sun to dry. Using a stencil, the artist places it on the fabric, paints the paste over the stencil, and then allows the fabric to dry (Handout 15). If the artist accidentally touches the cloth, the paste smears and the entire design is ruined.

At Nike's center for artists, melted wax is often used as the resist medium instead of cassava paste. Wax resist is called batik.¹⁴ After the designs are drawn on the cloth, it is dipped in the indigo blue dye, or it may be painted or dipped with other types of fabric dyes. The designs are placed together in square or rectangular sections to create the *adire* design.

Aesthetically pleasing, some of the designs also have important meanings that the *adire* artists know well. *Adire* cloth may be purchased for its designs. The cloth may also be valued for the *adire* artist who made it, just as Nike Davis's cloth is valued.

Adire designs come from everyday life—birds, flowers, wire, and chameleons are popular images (Handout 19). The environment influences the shape and texture of *adire* designs. As times change and new technology and consumer goods become a part of Yoruba peoples' lives, new images appear on *adire* cloth. For example, objects from everyday life now include motorcycles, bicycles, and cars.

The meanings behind *adire* designs are often metaphors and symbols (Handout 18). As Nike Davis said:

¹³ Cassava is a starchy root, also called manioc or tapioca; it is an important food item for the Yoruba people.

¹⁴ Batik n. 1. A method of dyeing print into a fabric in which parts of the cloth, not intended to be dyed, are covered with removable wax. (Malay, from Javanese, "painted.") *The American Heritage Dictionary*, New College ed., s.v. "batik."

" . . . a spoon is a representation of the eating utensil, but in adire, it also implies wealth, and the ability of a family to have much to eat. "

Adire is worn by both men and women. A woman may wear *adire* in the traditional way and wrap it around her body and tie it with a sash to create a skirt, or she may drape it around her head like a scarf (called a *wrapper*). Today, *adire* may also be cut up and sewn into jackets, dresses, and shirts (Handout 17).

DISCUSSION

Look at Handout 19. Describe the patterns in the cloth. Look specifically at representations of wire, a bird, flowers, a spoon, and a chameleon. Where would someone see these images?

Someone might see these things near home or on the way to work or school.

Do you think environment (climate, nature, surroundings) influences adire designs? (Think about how the beauty of nature is transferred to the beauty of an art object.)

Is there anything on your clothing that represents an idea, an animal, or an everyday object? Is there anything on your clothes that is a symbol for something, but you like it because it is appealing, not because of what it symbolizes?

Think about patterns in your clothing, and compare them to patterns of adire. Think of beautiful designs in your clothing, in nature, and in adire. Think about how nature is represented in art.

Adire designs can be meaningful but they are also beautiful. Adire designs are sometimes visual metaphors that are closely related to Yoruba proverbs and the world view of the Yoruba people.¹⁵ Cloths are named after proverbs such as The God of the Sea (it is also known as The World is Sweet), and I Will Sleep Among the Children. (Children are highly regarded and loved by the Yoruba people.)

¹⁵ A world view is a way that a person looks at life. An individual or a group's culture, religion, and visual environment shapes this point of view.

How is art on clothing different from other types of art?

Clothing moves. It is flexible, whereas other arts are more static. Clothing responds to a person's body movements. It catches the light and creates shadows in its folds. It drapes the body, accenting or hiding the body's form. It enhances a person's presence.

We talked about how adire was made from handwoven and then machine-made cloth. We also talked about how the everyday objects represented in adire designs now include such items as motorcycles. Has the pattern or design on your clothing changed in recent times?

Clothing worn today is different from the clothes our parents or grandparents wore. Changes in lifestyles are reflected in clothing.

ACTIVITIES

1. Adire Pattern Cards

MATERIALS Blue construction paper
White pencils or white pastels

Photocopy Handout 20. Look closely at the designs, and copy the designs freehand on blue colored paper with white pencils or pastels.

Place these designs around your classroom. Identify the meaning of the symbols found in your designs.

2. Adire Mural

MATERIALS Muslin fabric
Cassava paste or substitute
Paintbrushes, fabric paint

Photocopy Handouts 18 and 19. Look closely at the designs. Notice each design rests in a square or rectangular field (i.e., section), with fields resting side by side.

Copy the designs freehand or create your own designs for the fabric. (See detailed instructions under **Hand-painted Adire** below.)

When complete, hang the mural in the classroom or hallway. Please discuss the following:

- Identify the meaning of the designs
- Express your own ideas about the meanings of the designs through poetry or other writing activities.

Create your own designs for fabric. These designs should represent everyday items, such as the things you see on the way to school, or proverbs that you like and/or have made up.

Look at the *adire* design examples on the enclosed sheet. Compare these to their definitions. Create your own designs for things that are important to you, or sayings you like to use. Some examples might be symbols for friendship, aspects of nature, family, favorite sports, or pets. Draw these on paper or paint them collectively on a mural for the classroom. Discuss the symbols' meanings and explain the meanings of your symbols to each other.

3. Hand-painted *Adire*

Paste-resist dyeing is done by applying cassava paste onto fabric using paintbrushes, feathers, or sticks. It can also be painted over a thin metal-sheet stencil (Handout 15). This explanation focuses on hand-painted *adire*.

MATERIALS Cassava paste¹⁶ or substitute
Muslin cloth, newspapers, tape
Paintbrushes, fabric paint, handouts

A substitute for cassava paste called Presist and fabric paint are available from:

Cerulean Blue, Ltd.
P.O. Box 21168
Seattle, WA 98111-3168
206-323-8600
(1992 prices for Presist: 8 oz. \$11.75; 16 oz. \$22.00; 1 qt. \$36.50.)

Note: The cassava paste or its substitute looks something like custard.

¹⁶ When Nike Davis started working in *adire*, she used the leftover cassava paste from the evening meal as her medium for her work. As she continued working in her art, she came upon the idea to use wax instead of cassava as the resist medium. She obtained candle wax from the spent candles at her neighborhood's Nigerian Catholic church, and melted it down to paint on her cloths. Her wax resist pieces are called *batik*.

Summary of the Procedure: Make designs with the cassava paste or substitute and a paintbrush, then allow the paste to dry. Next, paint over the design with the blue fabric paint. When dry, the paste can be scraped off or rinsed off with water.

Procedure: Protect your work surface with newspaper. This is very important. Lay the fabric on the surface; you may want to tack it down with tape to keep it from moving about as you work. The entire class can work on one large piece of cloth to make a banner or mural, or students can work on individual pieces of fabric.

Draw on the fabric freehand with paste and paintbrush, imitating the *adire* designs seen in the slide or from the handout. Students may also draw designs they have invented. Allow the cloth to dry.

Next, paint the fabric with paint and brush. Allow the cloth to dry. After the paint is dry, scrape off the paste or rinse the cloth with water. When complete, designs will appear white against the field of color. Hang the artwork on the classroom walls.

Students will paint their *adire* once. However, traditional *adire* is usually dipped in vats of indigo dye six or seven times, or sometimes up to twenty times before the right shade of dark blue is achieved. Fabric cannot be left in the dye for longer than four minutes because the dye causes the paste to swell and then dissolve. This ruins the design. The cloth must be dried between each dip in the dye.

Handout 15: Nike Davis with Stencils

Yoruba, Nigeria

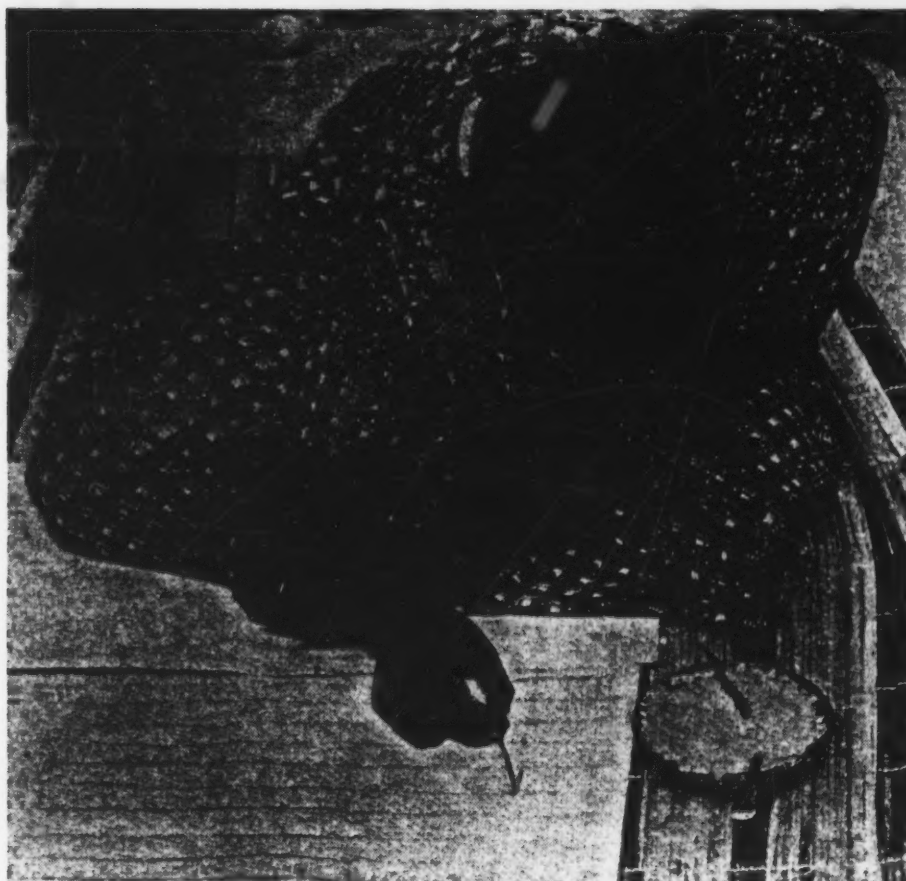


Photograph by Pamela McClusky, Seattle Art Museum, 1990, taken at the Nike Center, an artists' cooperative, in the town of Oshogbo, Nigeria.

Section 1: 59

Handout 16: Painting Fabric to Make *Adire*

Yoruba, Nigeria



A girl painting fabric with a feather and paste to make *adire*.

Photograph by Nancy Stanfield in Jane Barbour and Doig Simmonds, eds., *Adire Cloth of Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University of Ibadan, Institute of African Studies, 1971), p. 40.

Section 1: 61

Handout 17: Toyé Ojo Wearing Adire

Yoruba, Nigeria



Mama didn't want me to forget home, so she made me a jacket. The pattern on the jacket was the first one my mother made by herself. She was so proud that she painted the word "orimpe" on the cloth. She decided to save the cloth for a special occasion. The occasion arrived when I was getting ready to come to America. We decided the cloth would make a fine jacket, since jackets are so popular in America.

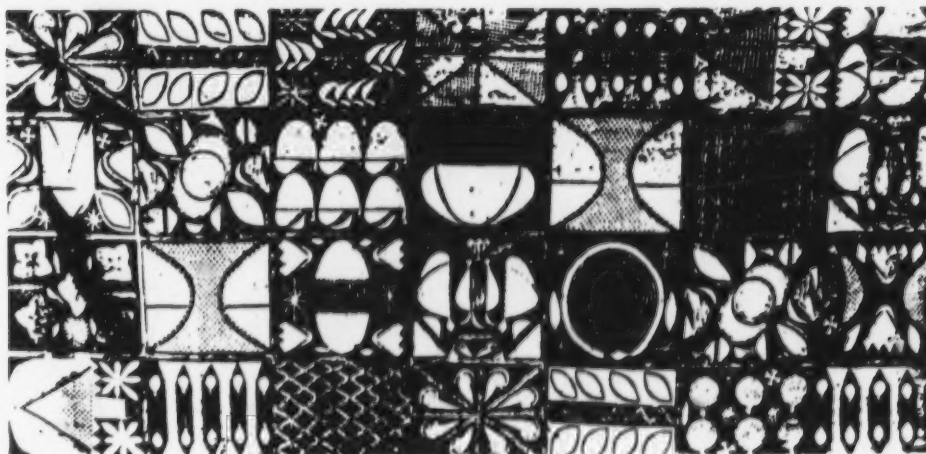
Toyé Ojo from Aeokuta, Nigeria. Photograph taken while Toyé was a student at the University of Massachusetts.

Photograph by Charles Brown in *Yoruba Blue: Symbols on Cloth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Educational Development Center, 1972), p. 43.

Section 1: 63

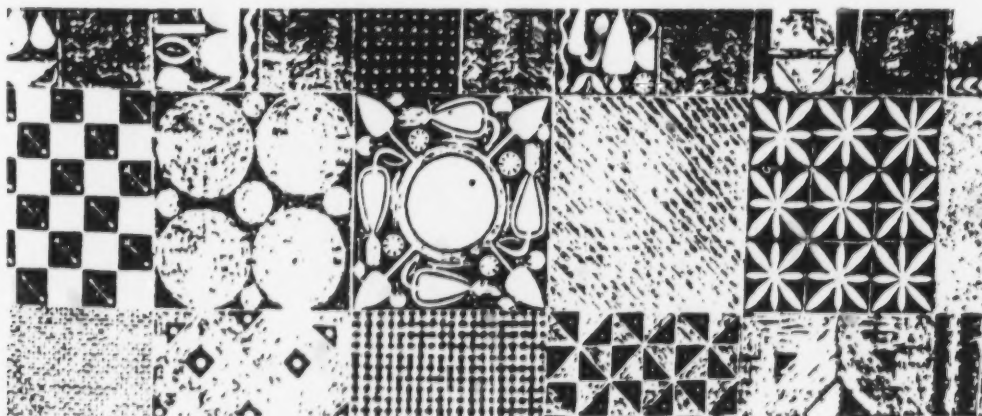
Handout 18: Ibadan Dun and Olokun Cloths

Yoruba, Nigeria



Hand-painted Ibadan Dun (Eh-bah-dahn Duhn)

Ibadan Dun translates to "Ibadan is sweet or pleasant." This refers to the Nigerian city that is the home of high-quality *adire eleko* (see 1:50). Barbour and Simmonds, *Adire Cloth*, p. 76.



Hand-painted Olokun (Oh-loh-kuhn)

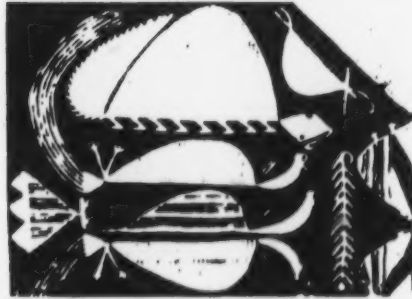
Translation: "The world is sweet." Olokun is the god of the sea. He may bring answers to prayers or grant special wishes and favors; therefore life is sweet. Ibid, p. 78, and Nike Davis, personal communication, 1991.

Photograph from Barbour and Simmonds, *Adire Cloth*, p. 40.

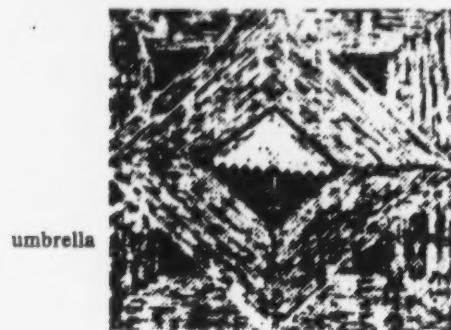
Section 1: 65

Handout 19: Samples of *Adire* Cloth Designs

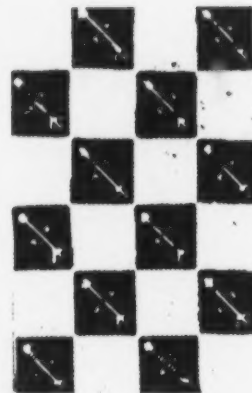
Yoruba, Nigeria



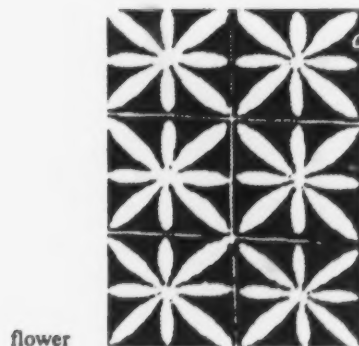
crested crane, chameleon, bird on nest



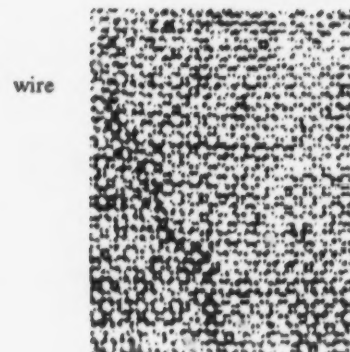
umbrella



faces



flower



wire

Photograph from Barbour and Simmonds, *Adire Cloth*, p. 40.

Section 1: 67

Handout 20: More Samples of *Adire* Cloth Designs

Yoruba, Nigeria

agufon (crested crane)

ewe (leaves)

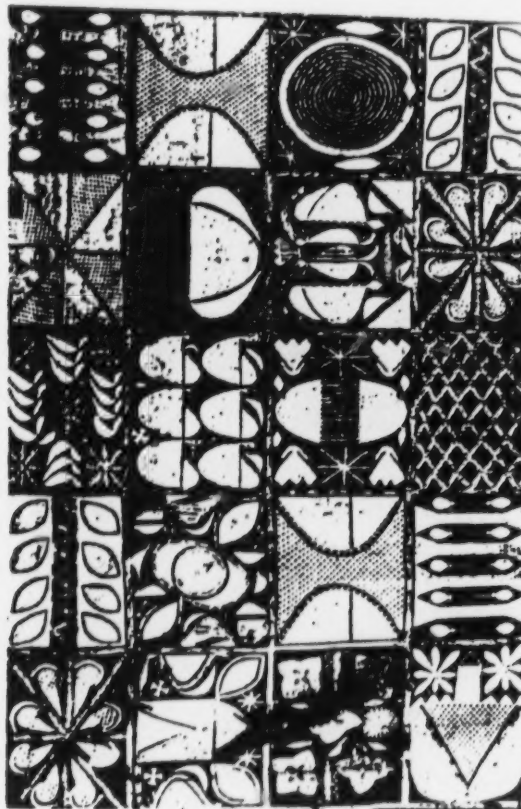
oga (chameleon)

eye (bird)

agboorun (umbrella)

ejo (snake)

igbako (spoon)



Lesson 5: *Adinkra* Cloth

Asante, Ghana

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of an *adinkra* cloth; discuss the materials, technology, and the use of cloth; and the meanings of *adinkra* designs. Students replicate *adinkra* designs and create their own versions of *adinkra* cloth designs.

GOAL Students will recognize the materials and techniques used in creating *adinkra* and understand the symbolic relationship between the founding of the Asante nation and the patterning of *adinkra* cloth. Students will recognize the use and meaning of symbols in *adinkra* cloth of the Asante people of Ghana.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will identify the materials and methods used to make *adinkra*.
2. Students will be able to recognize the special qualities of handmade textiles in comparison to machine- and factory-made cloths.
3. Students will understand the relationship between oral traditions (verbal arts) and visual arts.
4. Students will discuss the meaning of the symbols used in *adinkra* cloth.
5. Students will invent ways to represent their own life experiences in cloth designs.

TIME One hour and ten minutes

METHODS

1. Slide observation and discussion
2. Identification and analysis
3. Creative art projects

MATERIALS Slide 6, projector and screen
Muslin or cotton fabric, newspapers, clean-up cloths
Fabric paint, stamps (instructions on how to make your own, below)

Section 1: 71

- HANDOUTS** 21: *Adinkra* Cloth
22: Close-ups of *Adinkra* Designs
23: More Samples of *Adinkra* Designs
24: An Elder Wearing *Adinkra* Cloth
25: *Adinkra* Cloth Being Made

BACKGROUND

An important social quality in Ghanaian life is the ability to be discreet. Verbal communication may sometimes be indirect, and individuals may use proverbs to speak to one another. Visual communication may be indirect also—an artist may use symbols to portray an idea to his or her audience. *Adinkra* (ah-deank-rah) is an art that uses symbols to represent proverbs and metaphors. The cloth was customarily worn during funeral ceremonies, but now may be worn for a variety of social occasions (Handout 24). *Adinkra* cloths are worn and made today, and carry symbolic meaning just as they did in the past.

S
L
I
D
E
6

Adinkra is a type of stamped cloth (Handout 21) made by the Asante people of Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast.¹⁷ *Adinkra* was first made of loom-woven narrow strips of material sewn together. The seams of the strips were sewn together with multicolored thread. *Adinkra* may also be made from commercial cloth (which has a wider width than the strips) that is woven in Ghana and elsewhere. When commercially available cloth is used, artists embroider it where seams would normally appear if the fabric were composed of the narrower fabric strips.

Adinkra designs are stamped onto the fabric. Symbols are chosen and stamps of these are carved from the calabash, a type of gourd. Pieces of wood are attached to the calabash stamps as handles. The patterns of *adinkra* are made by stamping the cloth with a dye called *adinkra aduru* (ah-deank-rah ah-doo-roo) or *adinkra* medicine. It is prepared by boiling the bark of the *badie* tree (*Bridelia micranta* species) together with iron slag (a by-product from casting iron). The black dye mixture is heated until it reaches a tar-like consistency (Handout 25).

Color is an important symbol among the people of Ghana. In Ghana, the color black represents deep feelings of melancholy, death, and its associated power over

¹⁷ Gold Coast: A coast in western Africa along the southern shore of the Republic of Ghana, bordering the Ivory Coast on the west. It was named the gold coast by traders because of the vast amounts of gold taken from there to other areas of the world.

life and old age. Objects dedicated to the dead are usually colored black. This is similar to the wearing of black at funerals in the United States. Red is also used on occasions of melancholy, such as the death of a relative, wars, a feeling of collective national anger or crisis, violence, or sudden calamity. For symbolic reasons, *adinkra* cloths are often seen in red and black together.

The concept of unity is important to the Asante people and is represented in *adinkra*. The country of Ghana was founded when the several smaller kingdoms of Ghana were united as one nation. In *adinkra*, symbols appear in groups of twelve or more united designs displayed on a rectangular field. It is the series of fields, or sections, that make up the whole design of the cloth. The united symbols in *adinkra* cloth refer to the united kingdoms that make up the nation of Ghana.

Asante historians have spoken about the history of *adinkra* cloth in this way:*

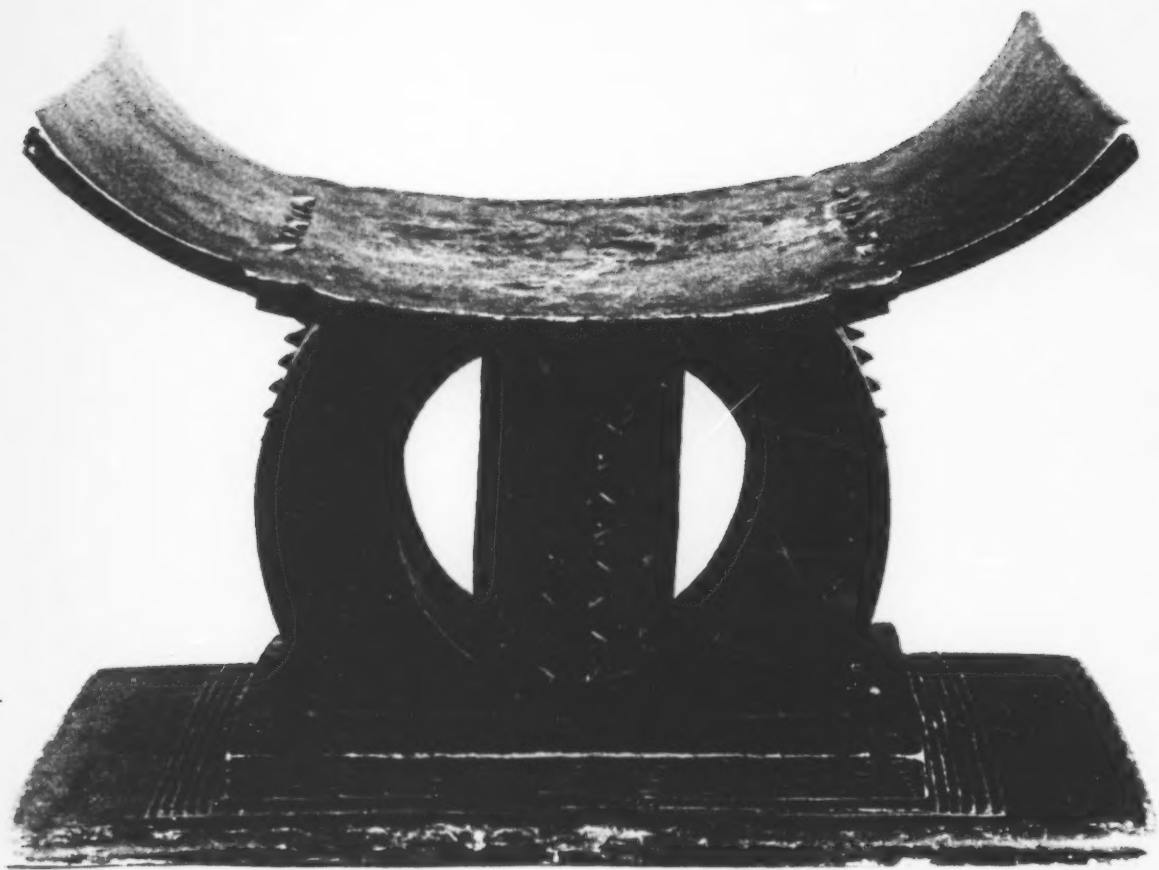
The King Adinkra, a famous ruler of the Gyaman people (now the Ivory Coast), angered Asantehene¹⁸ (ah-san-tah-heen-ee) Bonsu-Panin, who was a great and powerful king of the Asante empire. Adinkra did this by trying to copy the golden stool of Asante for himself. This stool is not just an item of furniture. It is very meaningful as it personifies and symbolizes the spirit of the Asante nation.

The Asantehene Bonsu-Panin ordered King Adinkra not to copy the golden stool. The King Adinkra ignored the order, and war broke out. King Adinkra was slain and his army defeated in the war for refusing the order from the King of Asante not to copy the golden stool.

At the time of this war, it was an Asante tradition to bring the people who were captured in a battle to serve in the homes of the victorious king and his paramount chiefs. Adinkra cloth came from the Gyaman artists who were brought to Asante after their leader, King Adinkra, was defeated. This is why the cloth was named after King Adinkra, as a means to say farewell to the defeated king. Hence, the Asante came to use this special cloth on funeral occasions to say good-bye to the deceased.

* As told by Joe Appiah-Kusi, M.D., Seattle, 1991.

¹⁸ *Asantehene*: ruler or king.



This is a picture of a stool similar to the golden stool mentioned in the story.

Adinkra design motifs are decorative and have symbolic meaning. Some symbols refer to rites of passage, such as birth, death, or marriage. Other symbols represent law, political power, authority, protective elements in life (such as God), the soul, and harmony with others and in life. Representations of animals, plants, stars, and geometric shapes are also shown.

Some of the meanings of the *adinkra* symbols may be unfamiliar to people who wear the cloth today. Many wear *adinkra* solely for its beauty, without knowing the symbolic designs ever had a message at all. The symbols form a subtle language, with meanings that are clear to the artist who created the cloth and to the people of the artist's particular town.

Section 1: 74

DISCUSSION

S L I D E 6

Describe the cloth shown in the slide. Describe the patterns. How are the patterns arranged on the cloth? What do the patterns represent? Are they repeated?

The cloth is rectangular. It is divided into smaller rectangles, each with its own symbol stamped onto it. The symbol is stamped in a repetitive manner, so each field is a grouping of symbols. The artist has decorated the seams where the strips of fabric were joined together with multicolored embroidery thread.

Look at the symbols on Handouts 22 and 23. Discuss the meanings of the symbols.

Why do you think the artist chose these particular designs?

An artist may choose certain symbols to signal an appropriate message and to create a beautiful cloth. For example, wearing a specific adinkra cloth to a funeral may, by use of the symbols, express nonverbally the feelings the wearer has about the deceased (example: Akoma have patience or die of a broken heart).

Can you think of any colors on your clothes that are meaningful?

Wearing black to a funeral shows others you are in mourning; wearing white at weddings symbolizes honesty; red, white, and blue are patriotic colors; people of Irish heritage often wear green on St. Patrick's Day to show their connection to Ireland.

Are there symbols from your cultural background that you might add to your clothing to give it more meaning? Compare and contrast this with adinkra. Is it possible to understand the symbols someone has on their clothes?

You might add symbolic buttons, pins, fabric paint, embroidery, or appliqué to your clothing.

Describe your favorite article of clothing and what it means to you when you wear it. What does it look like to your friends who know nothing about it?

(Engage students in a discussion here. This conversation may show them how their clothing may not have the same meaning to them as their peers think it has.)

Something taken out of context can be assumed to be one thing, but may not be that way at all.)

How do people communicate with one another?

There are many ways to communicate. Adinkra could be seen as a part of the communication process.

Discuss other methods of communication: spoken words, sign language, written materials (magazines, flyers, books, letters), the media (television, movies, radio), facial expressions, body language.

ACTIVITIES

1. *Adinkra* Pattern Cards

MATERIALS 3x5 construction paper or cloth squares
Colored markers

Photocopy Handouts 22 and 23. Look closely at the designs, and draw the designs on colored paper or on cloth squares.

Place these designs around your classroom (placing like designs together) in groupings of twelve similar designs (to signify unity). Talk about the symbols' meanings and the concept of unity.

Create your own *adinkra*-type symbols. These symbols should represent specific words, concepts, or proverbs that you like and/or have made up on your own. Draw these on paper or paint them collectively on a mural for the classroom. Discuss the symbols' meanings and explain the meanings of your symbols to each other.

2. *Adinkra* Mural

MATERIALS Fabric and fabric paint
Stamps for patterning (see instructions for making your own below)

(Read instructions under *Adinkra* Cloth Stamp and Dye.)

Photocopy Handouts 22 and 23. Look closely at the designs, and stamp the designs onto a sheet of fabric. Create the stamps ahead of time by cutting out sponges in specific *adinkra* shapes. Look for the way patterns are stamped (many times in groups of twelve).

When complete, hang the mural in the classroom or hallway. Then:

- Identify the meaning of the designs.
- Express your own ideas about the meaning of the designs through poetry or other writing activities or by discussion.

Create your own *adinkra* designs. These designs should represent specific words, concepts, or proverbs that you like and/or have made up on your own. Draw these on paper or paint them collectively on a mural for the classroom. Talk about the symbols' meanings and explain the meanings of your symbols to each other.

3. *Adinkra* Cloth Stamp and Dye

MATERIALS Stamps (make your own from a kitchen sponge or 1/2" foam)

Styrofoam meat trays

Plastic containers to hold ink (large margarine or yogurt containers)

Sponge squares (to be used as an ink pad)

Plain cotton fabric or T-shirts

Dark textile dye, newspapers

Procedure: Find your favorite *adinkra* symbol. Here are two ways to make a stamp:

First Method:

Cut a sponge with scissors into your desired *adinkra* symbol (teachers will have to do this for the K-3 group)

Second Method:

Draw your symbol onto thin sheets of foam. Cut these out and glue them onto the styrofoam meat trays.

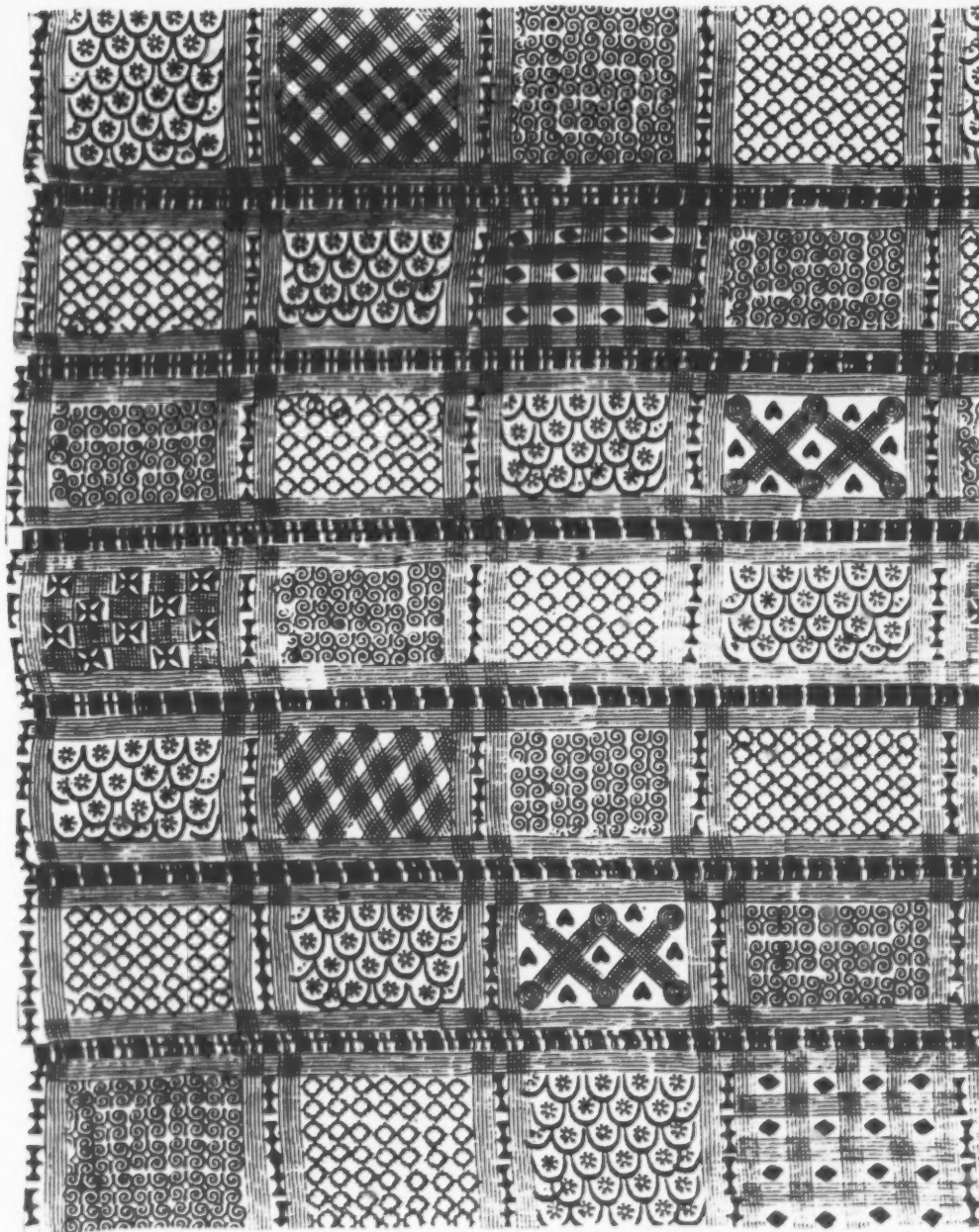
Protect your work surface with newspapers. Lay out your fabric or T-shirt and plan your design. Each area (a square or a rectangle) should have only one design in it. Place a sponge square in a plastic container. Add the textile dye. The sponge square is now an "ink pad." Place the stamp on the sponge pad.

Press the inked stamp onto the fabric, repeating the process until the square is filled. Trade stamps with your neighbors to use different designs. Let the dye dry for one-half hour. While you are waiting for your cloth to dry, ask your neighbors what their stamps mean, and why they chose them. Display your *adinkra*. Ask your fellow students what the designs mean to them.

Look around the classroom. Identify three examples of clothing with symbols on them which gives them personal meaning. How are these similar to or different from *adinkra* designs?

Handout 21: *Adinkra* Cloth

Asante, Ghana

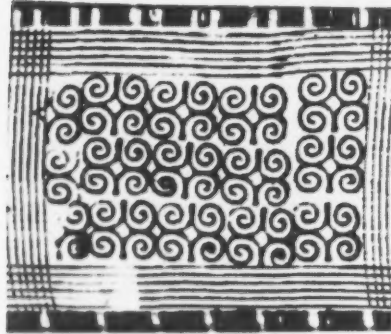


Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 1: 79

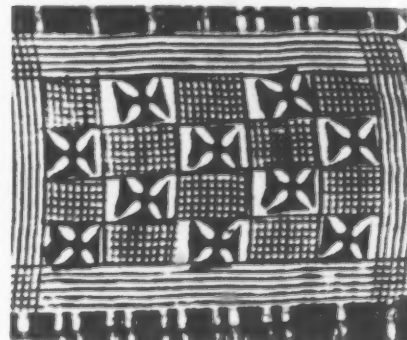
Handout 22: Close-ups of Adinkra Designs

Asante, Ghana

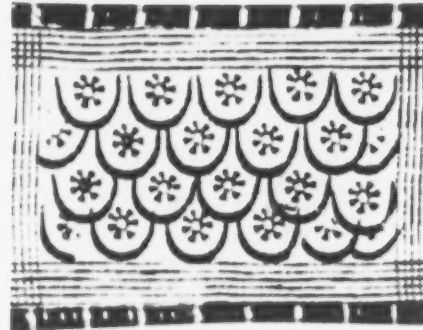


Dwanimen (Jah-neh-neh, Ram's Horn)
 "It is the heart and not the horns that leads a ram to bully." In other words, a nation goes to war not because it has the armaments (analogous to the horns of the Ram), but because there is some ideological or political conflict. ("It is what is in the Ram's heart, not his horns, which causes him to fight").

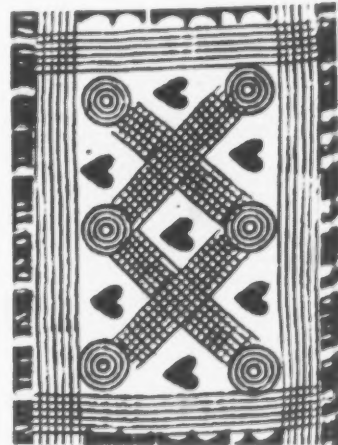
The Ram's head or horn symbolizes innocence or guiltlessness, as they are said to be a peaceful and faultless animal. Rams are a symbol of strength, force of will and mind, and of a strong character. When two rams meet in battle, one must bow to the other as a symbol of strength.



Kerapa (Keh-rah-pah)
 A good spirit. A symbol of sanctity and good fortune.



Akoko nan (Ah-ko-ko Nahn, Leg of a Fowl)
 The leg of the fowl is the symbol of the parent or guardian who is strict in dealing with children without being brutal to them. It represents the proverb "A hen may tread upon her chicks, but does not kill them." It is the symbol of absolute confidence in God.



Akoma (ah-coh-mah) (the Heart) "Nya Akowa"
 "Have patience or die of a broken heart."
 This is a symbol of patience and endurance, especially in times of hardship.

Section 1: 81

Handout 23: More Samples of Adinkra Designs

Asante, Ghana



A symbol of human relations.



The symbol of the soul.



Moon and star—a symbol of faithfulness.



A symbol of supreme authority.



A symbol for the proverb "You can always undo your mistakes."



"The seal of law and order" - a symbol of the authority of the Asante court.



The symbol of agreement or a contract.



The symbol for forgiveness.



The war horn.



Two crocodiles with one stomach; taken from the proverb: "They share one stomach, yet they fight over food."

Courtesy of *African Arts: A Discovery Unit from Field Museum of Natural History* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, Department of Education, 1977).

Section 1: 83

Handout 24: An Elder Wearing *Adinkra* Cloth

Asante, Ghana

An elder wearing an *adinkra* cloth, dancing and praising the Omanhene (oh-mahn-hee-nee) Akwapen (ahk-wah-pehn). Photograph taken during the 1972 Odwira festival at the palace in Akropong, Ghana.



Photograph courtesy of Patricia Crane Cornell in Herbert M. Cole and Doran H. Ross, *The Arts of Ghana* (Los Angeles: University of California, Museum of Cultural History, 1977), p. 17.

Section 1: 85

Handout 25: *Adinkra* Cloth Being Made

Asante, Ghana

An *adinkra* artist working on a cloth (photo taken in the late 19th century).



Photograph from Cole and Ross, *The Arts of Ghana*, p. 45.

Section 1: 87

Lesson 6: *Kente Cloth*

Asante, Ghana

Aberewa Bene (A Wise Elder Woman) *Kente Cloth*

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at slides of *kente* cloth and discuss the materials and technology used to make the cloth, the use of the cloth, and the meanings of *kente* designs. Students draw *kente* designs.

GOAL

Students will recognize the materials and designs used in making *kente* cloth in order to understand the use and meanings of the cloth. Students will replicate *kente* designs to help them understand the association between verbal art (proverbs) and visual art (*kente* cloth).

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will identify the materials and methods of making *kente* cloth.
2. Students will consider the differences between the special qualities of handmade textiles in comparison to machine- and factory-made cloths.
3. Students will understand the relationship between oral traditions (verbal arts) and visual arts.
4. Students will recognize the use of symbols and analyze their cultural significance.
5. Students will analyze how proverbs are shown in textile design.
6. Students will invent ways to represent their own life experiences in cloth designs, and formulate meanings for these designs.

TIME

One hour and ten minutes

METHODS

1. Slide observation and discussion
2. Identification and analysis
3. Creative art projects

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Section 1: 89

MATERIALS Slide 6, projector and screen
Muslin fabric
Fabric paint
Paintbrushes (or paper and colored markers)

HANDOUTS 26: *Kente* Cloth—Aberewa Bene
27: A Garment Made of *Kente* Cloth
28: Names and Designs for Some Types of *Kente* Cloths
29: A Chief Wearing *Kente* with an *Adinkra* Cloth in
Background

BACKGROUND

S
L
I
D
E
6

The weaving of *kente* (ken-teh) cloth of the Asante people (as-ahn-teh) dates back to the 17th century, and it is the traditional cloth of Asante and Ghanian people (Handout 29). *Kente* are richly colored textiles. Elaborate patterns are planned for each cloth which is woven in strips. This process is called strip-weaving.

Originally, *kente* was made of woven silk thread. Silk garments brought to Ghana for trade from Asia were unravelled, the threads were re-dyed and re-woven into the strips that make up a *kente* cloth. *Kente* cloth is customarily woven by men and worn only on festive occasions.

Today one can see *kente* cloth used in many different ways. Strips of *kente* are worn by people as sashes around the neck, men and women use the cloth for everyday as well as ceremonial occasions, and *kente* fabric is collected and hung in people's homes. *Kente* cloth is also used in making clothing. The jacket (Handout 27) is made with *kente* cloth woven by the Ewe (ehe-vay) people of northern Ghana. It is a style of garment worn by individuals of the Muslim faith and shows the influence of Islam in textile arts and clothing. *Kente* is gaining popularity in the United States, where it is made into vests, jackets, and other items of everyday wear.

The primary *kente* weaving center is the town of Bonwire (bon-yur-ee), Ghana. *Kente* is the Asantehene's (ah-san-tah-heen-ee) choice as the royal fabric.

An Asante legend tells us that the weaving of kente began when Anansi¹⁹ (ah-nan-see) taught two farmers, Kwaku Ameyaw (ka-wah-koo ah-meh-yow) and Otaa Kraban (oh-tah koor-ah-ban), how to weave by lessons shown to them from his spider web.

The designs were created first in black and white yarns by these two men. The weavings were presented to the Asantehene Nana²⁰ Osei Tutu who reigned in 1650-1712.

Kente was woven in black and white until the beginning of the reign of Asantehene Nana Agyeman Prempeh.²¹ At this time, many different colors of yarn became available to the weavers of Bonwire and to the neighboring villages of Baman (Bah-man) and Amaape (Ah-mah-peh). In honor of the Asantehene Nana Prempeh II (1938), the first multicolored cloth was made. This cloth is made up of red, green, and yellow stripes.

Asante *kente* cloth is readily distinguishable from other men's weaving by its use of brilliant colors and complex designs. Today the thread used to weave *kente* is imported rayon, silk, or cotton in bright shades of yellow-gold, blue, maroon, pink, green, and other colors. Black is used in very striking patterns and white generally appears only as a fine horizontal line between blocks in the composition of the cloth.

Each cloth design has a name. The name may refer to a proverb, or may memorialize a historic event or a specific person. Most *kente* cloths are based on well-known traditional designs, but a weaver may create a new pattern and give it

¹⁹ Anansi is the legendary and imaginative spider who appears in many stories from West Africa.

²⁰ Nana is a title which precedes the ruler or exalted one's name (something comparable to "Your Highness").

²¹ Asantehene Nana Agyeman Prempeh reigned from 1888-1924. His reign was interrupted during the years 1896-1924, when the British came to colonize Ghana. Prempeh preferred to be exiled to the Seychelles Islands by the British, rather than subject his people to war. His mother accompanied him, along with a royal entourage, to the Seychelles Islands.

As the Asante people are the only ones who can dethrone their leader, when Prempeh was allowed to return in 1924, the Asante people welcomed him back as the reigning Asantehene. The British welcomed him as a normal citizen at first, but later recognized him as Asantehene of the Kumasi state of Ghana. To this day, there are families in the Seychelles who are descendants of Prempeh I.

a new name. The weaver chooses a name and identity that will help to sell the cloth, such as a name that is symbolic or is a metaphor relating to current events (Handout 28).

One popular *kente* design was originally designed in honor of the first President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The design was marketed after Nkrumah was overthrown by a coup in 1966 as "A nation is not built by one person." Dr. Joe Appiah-Kusi²² comments:

This means that one man does not rule a nation. This is a significant reminder today to leaders of nations and chairs of boards of major corporations that they are likely to fail if they try to run their nations or corporations alone, without considering the thoughts and ideas of others. This may be compared to the expression, two heads are better than one.

Some names for *kente* cloth are listed below. Designs are shown on Handout 28.

1. **Adwiniasa** (ad-jin-ee-ah-sah) symbolizes the theme "all artistic designs are exhausted." This cloth is made of a multitude of designs and colors. It means the artist has outdone himself in weaving the *kente* cloth.
2. **Agyengyensu** (ah-jen-jen-suh) "settling in the sediment of muddy water." This cloth symbolizes peace-making.
3. **Aberewa Bene** (ab-uhr-an been) "a wise elder woman." This design symbolizes old age and the wisdom of women. It is highly significant because the oldest woman in the Asante royal family (a powerful person called the queen mother) helps choose the king and presents him to the people for their approval (Handout 26).
4. **Emmaada** (ah-mah-dah) "it has never occurred before." This cloth symbolizes a personal struggle for excellence in life or in work.
5. **Baakofo mmu oman** (ba-ku-fu mu ah-muhn) "one man does not rule a nation."
6. **Sika futuru** (see-kah foo-too-roo) "gold dust." This cloth is mostly yellow-gold in color. The design symbolizes wealth and glory.

²² Dr. Appiah-Kusi is from Ghana and lives in Seattle. He travels back and forth to Bonwire, Ghana. *Kente* is important to him because his father is a member of the royal family of Bonwire, the *kente* weaving center of Ghana. His relatives weave special *kente* for the royal family. The manufacturing technique and meaning of these textile designs are kept secret.

DISCUSSION

Look at the images. Describe the cloth. Carefully look at each rectangular design in the cloth. Are the designs identical to one another?

The strips are woven first, then sewn together. A man's cloth is made by sewing twenty to twenty-five woven strips together. Each strip is three-and-a-half to four yards long, and about four inches wide. The cloth is worn wrapped around the body and draped toga-like over the left shoulder. A woman customarily wears three cloths, each cloth smaller than the man's kente. One cloth serves as a long wrap-around skirt, one as a blouse to cover the upper part of the body, and the third draped as a shoulder cloth or head wrapper.

The designs of the *kente* cloth are not identical. The rectangular patterns appear to be very much alike, but have subtle differences. Their placement in the cloth is staggered. This design aesthetic is often called off-beat phrasing.

Whenever designs are made with a machine, the design elements are very exact and identical to one another. Handmade items have unique variations and delightful subtleties, possibly because, as an Asante artist has said:

Handmade works contain the spirit of the artist.

Notice how colorful the *kente* is. Color is very important in art. In *kente*, the color may symbolize the following things:

Gold or royalty, a continuous life, prosperity, warmth, glory, maturity,

Yellow: the prime of life, the presence of God

White: purity, virtue, joy, victory

Green: newness, fertility, vitality, primary growth

Black: vice, melancholy, death (or specifically, the power over life)

Red: melancholy, war, national crisis, violence, sudden calamity

Blue: love, tenderness, the crescent moon, the rule of the queen mother

A combination of red and yellow: life and its power over sickness

Green and white: a bountiful harvest

ACTIVITIES

1. *Kente* Pattern Cards

MATERIALS 3" x 5" construction paper cards (yellow or white)
Colored markers

Photocopy the images of *kente* cloth. Look closely at the designs and copy them freehand on the cards with markers using colors chosen for their symbolism. Write a word or phrase for the design on the back of the card.

Place the cards around your classroom. Talk about how artists represent ideas in their weavings. When you have finished this activity, you may mail these cards out as postcards to friends.

2. *Kente* Mural

MATERIALS Strips of paper or fabric (3 feet to 3 yards long
and 6 inches wide)
Fabric paint, paintbrushes

Photocopy the images of *kente* cloth. Look closely at the designs and copy them freehand onto fabric or paper using fabric paints. Refer back to the slide to see how the *kente* design is placed repetitively on the strip of woven cloth.

When complete, hang the mural strips in the classroom or hallway, placing strips side by side to make a "*kente* cloth." Then:

- Identify the meaning of the designs.
- Express your own ideas about the meanings of the designs.

3. Personal Symbols and African Textile Symbols

MATERIALS Fabric (3 yards long and 4 inches wide)
Markers or fabric paint and paintbrushes

Photocopy the images of *kente* cloth and look at the examples of patterns found on them. Paint these design blocks, and consider their meanings. Next, create your own *kente*-like designs for fabric.

Assign a meaning and a name to your design which reflects a proverb or a metaphor you know or wish to create. Perhaps you would like to represent a current event similar to the "A Nation is Not Built by One Person" cloth.

Take the strips of paper and paint the *kente* designs on them (or use markers). Discuss what each design means to you. Compare each block design to another. Notice the differences and similarities.

The designs should represent specific words, concepts, or proverbs that you like and/or have made up on your own. Talk about the symbols' meanings and explain the meanings of your symbols to each other.

4. Poetry

Think about some of the names for *kente* cloth (Handout 28). Read the meaning for each design. Why do you think these meanings are significant and relevant? Write a poem about what a certain design means to you.

For example, think about the proverb illustrated in *kente*, "old age and wisdom among women." What does this mean?

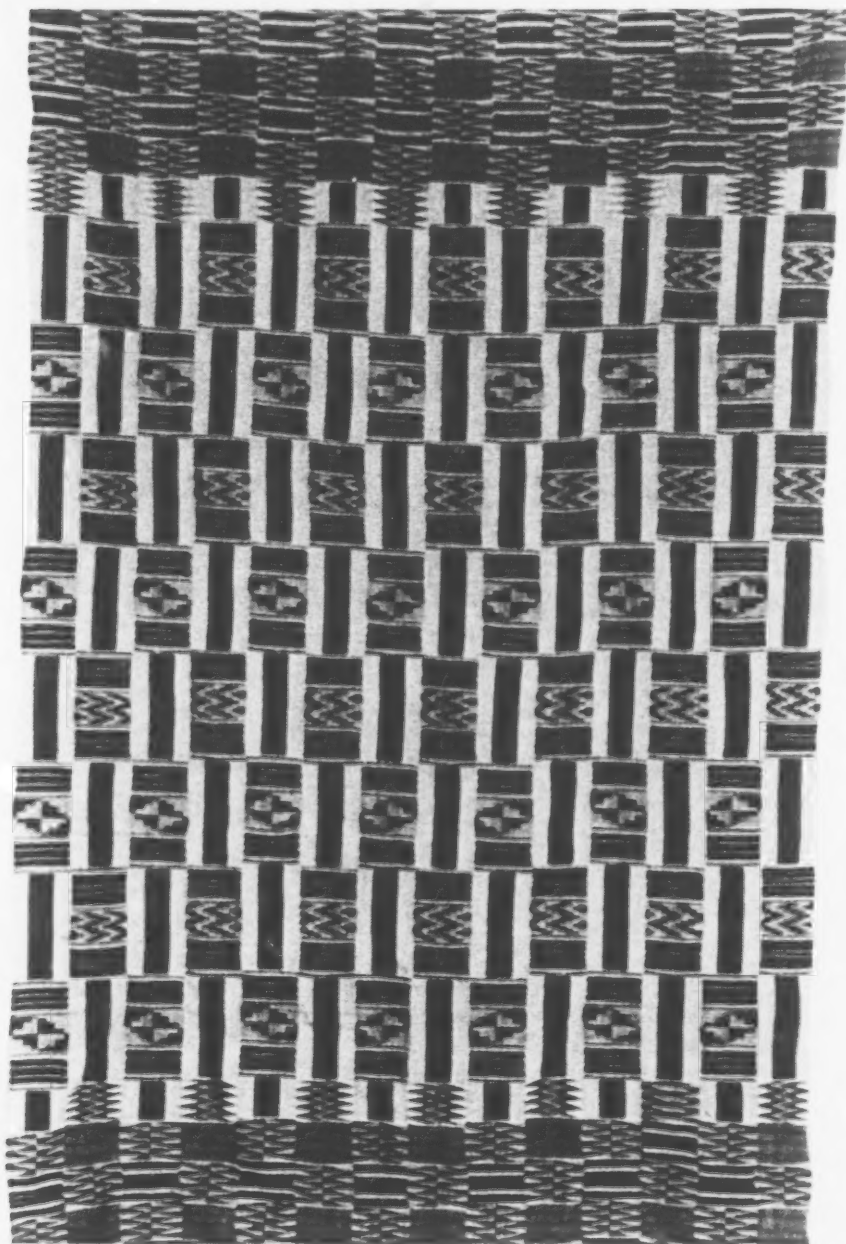
In Ghana, women are highly regarded members of society. Elder women are especially revered. They are considered to be wise and the nation relies upon them for their wisdom and strength. In many cultures, in the United States and elsewhere, people are taught to have respect for their elders because they have knowledge about many of life's lessons.

Do you rely on the wisdom and strength of others? Why is it important to learn about wisdom and strength? What do you think about learning from your elders?

Handout 26: *Kente Cloth*—Aberewa Bene

Asante, Ghana

Aberewa Bene (A Wise Elder Woman)



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 1: 97

Handout 27: A Garment Made of *Kente* Cloth

Asante, Ghana

Batakari (northern-style smock) made from *kente* cloth.

This jacket is in a style worn by people of the Muslim faith and shows Islamic influence in the clothing of Ghana.



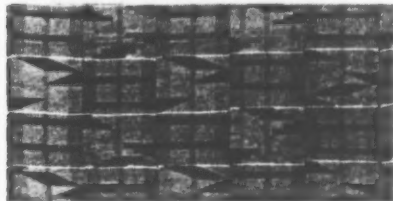
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 1: 99

Handout 28: Names and Designs for Some Types of *Kente* Cloths

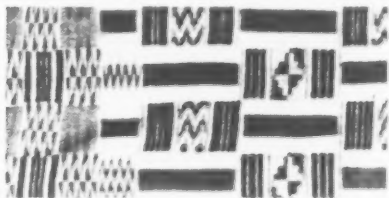
Adwiniasa (ad-jin-ee-ah-sah)



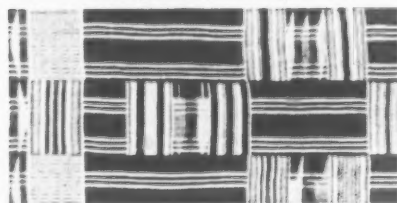
Agyenyensu (ah-jen-jen-suh)



Aberewa Bene (ab-uhr-an been)



Emmaada (ah-mah-dah)



**Handout 29: A Chief Wearing Kente
with an Adinkra Cloth in Background**



Nifahene (right-hand war chief) Nana Kwame Amopomah (nih-fah-hee-nee nah-nah kwah-may ahm-poh-mah) wearing *kente*. An *adinkra* cloth hangs in the background.

Photograph courtesy of Dennis Warren in "Bono Royal Regalia," *African Arts Magazine* (Winter 1975), p. 20.

Lesson 7: *Wunkirmian* (Feast-Making Spoon)

Dan, Liberia, Ivory Coast

What types of foods are eaten in Africa?
How do people cooperate to provide food, feasts, and shelter?
Who is acknowledged for their work in providing these things?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Handout 30: Dan Woman Using a Feast-Making Spoon

Dan, Liberia



Dan woman using a *wunkirmian* (woo-kee-le-mahn) at a feast.

Photograph by Eberhard Fischer in Eberhard Fischer and Hans Himmelheber, *The Arts of the Dan in West Africa* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1984).

Section 1: 106

Lesson 7: Wunkirmian (Feast-Making Spoon)

Dan, Liberia, Ivory Coast

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of a feast-making spoon, discuss its use and meaning, and perform an art activity.

- GOAL** Students will discuss the use of the Dan spoon to understand how generosity is recognized through community action and an art object.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will examine the Dan feast-making spoon and discuss its ceremonial importance.
 2. Students will analyze symbols on the spoon and how they relate to the concept of generosity.
 3. Students will identify how generosity and other social values are expressed through an art form.
- TIME** 40 minutes
- METHODS**
1. Slide observation and discussion
 2. Creative art projects
 3. Descriptive and creative writing
- MATERIALS** Slides 7 and 8, projector and screen
Collage materials (magazines, newspapers), glue sticks, paper, pens, "found art" materials to create trophy
- HANDOUTS**
- 30: Dan Woman Using a Feast-Making Spoon
 - 31: Feast-Making Spoon
 - 32: Chameleon Design on Spoon

BACKGROUND

The Dan are one group of people who live in Liberia and the Ivory Coast of Africa. The Dan people cultivate rice, manioc, plantain, and yams. They also hunt, fish, and plant coffee and rubber trees.

One of the highest forms of virtue for the Dan people is generosity. This virtue is publicly acknowledged through a ceremony involving the Dan spoon. The spoon is given to a woman who is chosen by her peers for her generosity (Handout 31).

S
L
I
D
E
S

A Dan woman is awarded this spoon as a badge of her status as *wunkirle* (woo-kee-leh). She is chosen by the people as "most hospitable woman" (or **feast-making woman**) of the town. In every quarter of a town, she is seen as the one who has a most generous heart to invite visitors, guests, traveling dance troupes, and people in general into her home to house and feed them. Her ability to be so gracious comes from her positive nature as well as from her successful work; this allows her to be most generous to anyone who comes to her doorstep.

7
&
8

During special ceremonies that celebrate the virtue of generosity, she dances, swinging her ladle, while a group of women chant encouragement and show support by singing and dancing around her. Women follow her carrying bowls of rice. When she arrives at the village square, she dips into the bowls of rice and distributes the rice to others in a gesture of giving. The dance symbolizes and demonstrates her abundance of goodness and hospitality (Handout 30).

When the woman who owns the feast-making spoon becomes old or is dying, she chooses a woman from her town to be her successor. The recipient of this great honor is then given the feast-making spoon.

A chameleon design is carved on the back of the spoon. The chameleon is a being that is associated with the earth and fertility. It lives in the soil and is believed to have contact with the ancestors. It is said to possess human qualities (Handout 32).

DISCUSSION

Describe the spoon.

The wooden spoon was elaborately carved by a local artist in Liberia. The artwork has been handled and worn to a deep

shine. The spoon has a human torso, legs, and feet. Her legs are slightly bent, as if prepared to bear weight and/or to serve. Her kneecaps are rounded, and she has well-defined strong calves, as if showing us she has the strength necessary to take care of herself, her own family, and others. She wears ankle bracelets—articles of personal adornment and a sign of beauty. Above the torso is the spoon. On the back of the spoon is a design of a chameleon.

We learn about art from the people who make it.

When the Dan people speak about the spoon they focus on these issues: they talk about their respect for the diligent, intelligent, hard-working woman who is honored for her dignity through receiving the spoon. The people honor these attributes, and publicly acknowledge her importance by giving "the most hospitable woman" the feast-making spoon.

There are many ways to talk about art. Often, people educated in the Western tradition talk about art based on how it looks (using a visual vocabulary). An anthropologist/art historian team²³ (who are not Dan) have spoken about the spoon this way:

On the spoon, the ladle emanates from a torso of the female form.

They go on to say:

The spoon suggests the belly of a woman and speaks of the significance of the giving of life. The large bowl end is called "pregnant with rice belly."

Compare the two different ways of speaking about the spoon. Are they different? How so?

One response is from the people who create and celebrate with the spoon (the Dan). Their point of view reflects inside knowledge of the piece and its meaning.

The people from outside the culture are talking about the spoon based on a different world view (point of view), referring primarily to how it looks. To find out the meaning of the spoon, they move from a visual vocabulary (how it looks) to a contextual vocabulary (what it means). They must rely on the people who make and use the spoon to tell them its meaning.

²³ Fischer and Himmelheber, *Arts of the Dan*, p. 157.

Discuss the parallel between a generous woman and the term "pregnant with rice belly."

The woman portrayed in the spoon gives life (food = sustenance) from her belly. The belly (the spoon) is where the food is held and given to others, as a Dan woman gives life from her food and generosity.

What might this spoon symbolize, or what does it make you think of?

It symbolizes food, or the giving of food, and generosity, especially the generosity of a specific woman among the Dan people.

Why do you think the act of giving food is represented in a work of art that represents generosity? Why is the act of giving important?

Giving food is a form of generosity, and food gives life, so giving food is a life-giving act. Food nourishes you, sustains you, keeps you healthy and in good spirits.

Specific representations of animals may show a relationship between the art object and the animal.

Look carefully at the back of the spoon (Handout 32). Is there a relationship between the shape of the spoon and the design of the chameleon?

The chameleon is as long as the belly of the spoon. The chameleon swells where the belly of the spoon bulges.

Why do you think a design of a chameleon would be on this spoon?

(student responses)

Designs are often symbolic and have important meanings. A chameleon is a being that lives very close to the earth, the earth which gives the Dan their food supply and their lives. The earth is the nurturer (food) and mother (life-giver). The chameleon design may be asking us to compare fertility and productivity with the most hospitable woman of the feast-making spoon. Specific representations of animals may show a relationship between the art object and the animal.

Why do you think the woman of the feast-making spoon has such strong legs?

A physically strong person can work hard and help others who are not as strong. A strong person can be a good provider.

What could be one reason that the spoon is associated only with women?

Women are the life-givers (by having children), and food and generosity are life-giving forces.

Why do you think the spoon form and a woman's body are combined in this art form?

Generosity, giving life, and sharing are all important to life.

ACTIVITIES

1. Poetry and Symbols

What is there in our society or in your culture that honors a nurturing manner? How do you, your family, and friends treat people you consider generous or having a nurturing manner?

List the things you need to survive as a living being and the qualities that allow you to thrive. What does another human being need to possess to be able to provide these things for you? What do you need to possess to be able to provide for others?

Create symbols for these qualities that are life-enhancing, such as generosity. Draw these symbols.

Write a poem about how you honor generosity. Next to your poem, draw a symbol that represents generosity. Present this art to someone you feel nurtures you, or is generous to you.

Discuss how presenting your symbol of generosity is similar in concept to the presentation of the Dan spoon. How is it different?

2. Mural or Collage

Think of someone in your life (your parents, teacher, coach, friend, or historic person whose teachings you are grateful for) who is generous and who gives you the things you need to survive and thrive. What symbols represent their character traits of nurturing, generosity, and care giving? Draw these and cut them out. Paste them around the classroom in a group mural. Have a group discussion about your classroom's representations of generosity and hospitality.

As you participate in these activities, try to think about and recognize generous natures in other people, or try to be generous towards other people.

Compare this work of art to a trophy. The feast-making spoon represents a woman who is being honored, respected, and thanked for her generous nature. Do we have acknowledgment in our society for people who show generosity?

Plaques, awards, and trophies honor people's good deeds.

3. Class Project

Design an award or trophy for generosity (or another worthy trait) and award it to the student (male or female) who deserves it most, noting why.

Handout 31: Feast-Making Spoon

Dan, Liberia



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 1: 113

Handout 32: Chameleon Design on Spoon

Dan, Liberia



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 1: 115

Section 2: Art for the Community (Community Performance)

Introduction

Masks are used in many areas of the world. For many people in the United States, masks are objects that cover the face and are worn during special times such as Halloween and Mardi Gras. They are disguises worn by people for entertainment and fun, and often allow for behavior that would not otherwise be acceptable.

In contrast, in other cultures (such as Native American in the United States, Yoruba in Nigeria, and in many others throughout the world) masks may have many functions, and often their mission is solemn and purposeful. Frequently, a mask's full meaning is kept private within its culture. Therefore, it is often true that what we see and think about masks is only a portion of the total information there is to know about them.

Masks in Africa have many purposes. They may speak of the importance of social control, or act as an integral part of an initiation into special secret societies. They may be used in ceremonies that mark passages into different important life phases, they may be used in masquerades, or in performances to ensure specific success (as in agricultural success). They may be used in the perpetual quest for attainment of a balanced and harmonious existence with other human beings and the earth. Masks frequently represent spirits.

A person wearing a mask may "become" the being the mask is representing. He or she may be expressing an affinity with the being or may be re-creating someone else's experience with the being the mask portrays.

A mask, in its original circumstance, is a part of a larger costume ensemble. This includes the clothing, accessories, dance, song, ritual, symbolism, and attitude of the dancer, participation by an audience, and inherent cultural meanings that make up the entire mask unit. All of these elements are interwoven in the homeland of the people who made the mask. Also, there are a number of masquerades that appear together. Unfortunately, masks in museums or galleries are often displayed as solitary objects.

A mask and its accompanying regalia and ritual may be very loosely compared to the kind of transformation that takes place in the theater. Looking at a mask out of context is like trying to understand the musical *Phantom of the Opera* from a single mask. The entire costume, sets, music, words, protocol, its roots in history, the concept of teamwork, interaction, conflict, resolution, and the interaction and ritual

of the participants and the spectators are lost in this evaluation. It is important, therefore, when talking about masks to think about:

where the mask is from,
who is wearing it,
what does the entire outfit look like,
what does it look like in its intended context,
and what does it mean to the maker of the mask and the people who use it?

In this unit, you will find slides of the masks taken during actual performances in their homelands.

When people are in their mask ensemble, they are no longer fully themselves. Under the apparel they wear and the ritual they perform they are still the same person, but for a small period of time, they become the embodiment of the spirit they are representing to the community. The performers are, in fact, changed. This transformation process is a key concept, and has been a source of wonderment to outsiders studying peoples who have active masking traditions. We may think of transformation as an alien idea, but, transformation is all around us. Think of the transformation children undergo from puberty into adulthood, the transition of day to night, or the changes flowers and trees go through in a year's time. People change or transform as they learn new ideas, and hopefully, they become more aware, more mature, and more responsible individuals.

A person wearing a mask has many responsibilities. The individual must follow the protocol of the mask tradition, know the movements to make and the gestures to use. The person must be strong enough to wear the mask, which sometimes can be quite cumbersome and heavy. The person has to work hard, be earnest and sincere, and follow the series of initiations required in order to obtain the honor of wearing the mask.

In this section, the use of masks relates to important issues: **humankind's devotion to and dependence upon nature (Tyi Wara)**; the **veneration of ancestors (Epa mask)**; and the continual aspiration for social order by the instilling of humility (Basinjom).

Section 2: Art for the Community

A. Introductory/Evaluation Questions

- Lesson 8. What are some common animals in Africa?
What influence do animals have on cultural traditions in Africa?
(or, What is the relationship between humans and animals in Africa?)
- Lesson 9. How are masks used?
Are masks always scary?
What types of people are portrayed in masks?
- Lesson 10. What do masks do?
Can masks be helpful?
What types of personality traits are portrayed in a mask?

B. West African Art Objects Examined in Answer to the Above Questions

- | | | |
|------------|-------------------|---|
| Lesson 8. | Bamana, Mali | Tyi Wara (chee-wah-rah)
(Male and Female Antelope Headdress) |
| Lesson 9. | Yoruba, Nigeria | Epa (ee-pah) Mask |
| Lesson 10. | Banyang, Cameroon | Basinjom (bah'-sehn-johm)
Mask and Gown |

**Lesson 8: Tyi Wara:
Male and Female Antelope Headdress**

Bamana, Mali

What are some important animals in Africa?
Which animals do you think live in the drier regions of
Africa (the savannah)?
What lessons can people learn from animals?
What is the relationship between the animals of the
savannah and the Bamana people of Mali?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Handout 33: Male and Female Tyi Wara Performing

Bamana, Mali

Male and female Tyi Wara performing in the savannah of Mali.



Photograph courtesy of Pascal James Imperato, M.D. Also shown in "The Dance of the Tyi Wara," *African Arts Magazine* (Autumn 1970), p. 9.

Section 2: 122

Lesson 8: Tyi Wara: Male and Female Antelope Headdress

Bamana, Mali

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at slides of the headdress and a headdress in context, discuss the story of Tyi Wara, and participate in an art activity.

GOAL	Students will discuss the story of Tyi Wara and look at the headdress in order to explore how history and humankind's relationship to the environment is conveyed through oral history and art.
OBJECTIVES	1. Students will discuss the Tyi Wara story and analyze symbols on the headdress to see how they represent elements of the story. 2. Students will explore how legends are conveyed through art. 3. Students will explore the relationship among the earth, human beings, plants, and animals as expressed in Tyi Wara.
TIME	45 minutes
METHODS	1. Slide observation and discussion 2. Creative art projects 3. Descriptive and creative writing
MATERIALS	Slides 9 and 10, projector and screen Pens, paper, magic markers or crayons
HANDOUTS	33: Male and Female Tyi Wara Performing 34: Piling the Harvested Grains for Storage 35: Male and Female Tyi Wara

STORY

S
L
I
D
E

9

The Story of Tyi Wara²⁵

The earth's first beings named their firstborn child Tyi Wara (chee-wah-rah). Tyi Wara is half-human and half-animal, and is responsible for having taught the Bamana people how to respect and farm the land around their home.

Tyi Wara used his skill and knowledge to cultivate the wild grasses of the savannah by using his claws and a wooden stick to plant the ground. Because of his knowledge of the earth and its needs, lands that were once dry are now fields of millet and corn.

The people were happy to have Tyi Wara and became used to the abundance of food. As time passed, however, they became forgetful of the lessons Tyi Wara had taught them and stories were circulating that caused Tyi Wara great sadness. For example, he heard that the people were throwing millet around and that it was being wasted. In his grief, he dug a hole in the ground and disappeared from the people.

Because of Tyi Wara's disappearance, the Bamana recognized they had been lazy and regretted that they had treated the land and the crops they had relied upon so wastefully. To remind themselves of the lessons of Tyi Wara and to apologize to him, they made headdresses representing Tyi Wara. They wore these male and female headdresses during the first masquerade to honor Tyi Wara. In doing so, the people appeased Tyi Wara, and remembered the lessons he had left to them.

BACKGROUND

The Bamana people who perform the Tyi Wara masquerade live in the dry savannah region of Africa in the country of Mali. Tyi Wara headdresses are worn

²⁵ From a story retold in Imperato, "The Dance of the Tyi Wara," *African Arts Magazine*, p. 8.

during ceremonies that honor, remember, and respect what Tyi Wara taught the Bamana people. The antelope headdress in this slide is the type mentioned in the story.

In farming, the Bamana work together as a group to clear, hoe, plant, and cultivate large fields of millet and sorghum. Their work is under the guidance of Tyi Wara, the beast of work. Tyi Wara reminds the people of the stories about farming, as well as the practical considerations they need to know to acknowledge farming customs, practices, and traditions. Tyi Wara is part antelope (an animal that is alert, agile, and has great stamina), and part aardvark (an animal that has the determination to seek out food in a dry environment, like the savannah).

There is a female and a male Tyi Wara. You can see them both in the slide. The female is the oryx antelope, and she has a baby oryx antelope on her back. She is like a human being in that she carries her baby for nine months before she gives birth. To the Bamana people, she is a model of devotion and loyalty to her home, and she is known for her ability to withstand thirst. Her long horns remind the people of the long grasses of millet, fonio, and sorrel grains that they rely on for food in their savannah home (Handout 35). She represents the earth, the young, women, and human beings.

The male headdress is a combination of aardvark and antelope (Handout 35). The aardvark is strong and persevering. Aardvarks dig to eat, as farmers dig to grow food to eat; a metaphorical parallel exists between the aardvark and the farmer. The male Tyi Wara's zigzag mane pattern represents the sun as it moves between the summer and winter solstice.

The Bamana people look forward every year to the Tyi Wara masquerade. It focuses on the spiritual and physical energy needed to farm successfully in the savannah, an area of low-grade soil.

The Tyi Wara masquerader carries a digging stick used to sow plants in the earth. The raffia-fiber gown represents rain. The Tyi Wara, male and female, are inseparable, and work together in their performance, dancing in the savannah. The female chorus called *togo-fu* (praise singers) sing and dance behind Tyi Wara.

A Praise Song for Tyi Wara²⁶

(This story is sung during the Tyi Wara performance. The story is set in the earliest of time in history.)

*Faro (the water spirit) appears in the figure of Tyi Wara.
He comes to the future King of the Segou (sé-goo) Kingdom.*

²⁶ Ibid., p. 77.

*Faro takes the king to a place that has lots of water.
There, he shows him a piece of gold, a piece of silver, and a pile of grain.
Faro asks the king,
Choose: gold and silver, they are wealth:
seeds, they are power.*

Ask students to talk about the meaning of this story.

Today, the Tyi Wara festival is used to honor successful farmers. Antelope spirits are called upon (by masking) at all of the important phases and events of life, so they may promote growth and life. During periods of drought, the Tyi Wara pair go to the river with sacrificial offerings. They dance in the farm fields, always as a couple.

DISCUSSION

*Talk about the differences between the male and female Tyi Wara (Handout 35).
Point out their individual attributes.*

The male's mane is the large area behind the male's head (the male is the one without the baby); the solstice of the sun is represented by the male mane; the baby rests on the female's back; rain is represented by the raffia-fiber costume for male and female; and the digging stick is represented by the long snout.

By looking at the horns, can you see how crops such as millet and corn are represented in the animals?

The horns are tall, like the food plants, and the male's horns arc back slightly, as plants do in a slight breeze.

Why do you think these things are represented? Please explain what these things mean to you.

These things relate to farming, food, life, and community.

What does Tyi Wara teach the Bamana people about agriculture?

Tyi Wara teaches people to be careful about how they treat the earth, how to plant successfully, and how to remember that which gives you sustenance and life.

The oryx antelope can survive on very little water. Why would resistance to thirst be an admirable quality?

In an area that has little rain, being able to thrive and grow with little water is an important adaptation for a successful life.

Why do you think the male and female Tyi Wara act as one inseparable unit in their performance (Handout 33)?

Men and women must work together on the farm to have a successful harvest and survive.

Why does Tyi Wara remind you of farm fields (Handout 35)?

The antlers look like long grasses in the savannah, the animals are from the earth, just as plants and people are from the earth.

What are the symbolic meanings of the male and female Tyi Wara headdresses?

Digging (aardvark), the sun (the male neck), and rain (the male and female raffia gown) are all necessary for plants to grow and for the people to survive. The representation of the baby antelope shows the continuance of life.

ACTIVITIES

1. At the Library (High School)

Agriculture in Africa

Research today's efforts by agricultural associations to gather information about crops and the field experimentation taking place in the savannah of Mali.

Research conservation of resources and land management in Mali, and in other countries of Africa.

2. Agriculture and You (Middle School)

Research what you would need to do in your own yard or space to grow crops such as millet, peaches, yams, or any other food.

Draw a map of your yard, front or back, or of a small plot of land or container that could serve as a garden space. Go to the library, to nurseries, or ask growers what comes next. Look at the soil, what does it need? Look at the weather, when should you plant? How much will you water? How long is the growing season?

Do you have to start your plantings indoors or outside? What else do you need to consider? Who will help you do this?

3. In the Studio (K-3)

Think about how the artists who carved these masks made them look like the grasses by carving their horns in a plant-like way. Draw animals in ways that make them look like grasses, trees, flowers, the sun, the stars, or other parts of nature.

Think of the relationship of the animal to the plant or element. Tell a story about the relationship, either in a short poem or essay, or create an oral tradition about your animal's relationship to the plant, grasses, trees, sun, stars, or other natural phenomena.

Handout 34: Piling the Harvested Grains for Storage



Cylinders of millet, a dry climate staple food, are placed in a pile for drying. When needed, they are beaten to remove the grain from the stalk. The chaff is then separated, then the millet is pounded into flour. It is mixed with water and eaten as a porridge or baked into cakes.

Photograph by George Gerster in *National Geographic Magazine* (August 1975), p. 161.

Section 2: 129

Handout 35: Male and Female Tyi Wara

Bamana, Mali



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 2: 131

Lesson 9: Epa Mask

Yoruba, Northern Ekiti, Nigeria
Oloko (Lord of the Farm)

How are masks used?
Are masks always scary?
What types of people may be portrayed in masks?
What is the role of the ancestor in the family, in society?

**Handout 36: Epa: Oloko (Lord of the Farm)
Masquerade**

This photo is of a masquerade called Epa: Oloko (Lord of the Farm) in performance at the Epa Festival at Otun, Ekiti, Nigeria, 1977.



Photograph by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, *Yoruba*, p. 192.

Section 2: 134

Lesson 9: Epa Mask

Oloko (Lord of the Farm)
Yoruba, Northern Ekiti, Nigeria

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at slides of an Epa mask and the mask in context, discuss its use and meaning, and participate in art and literary activities.

- GOAL** Students will understand the use of the mask in order to understand ancestor veneration and ancestor influence as shown in the Epa performance of the Yoruba people.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will understand the use of the Epa mask.
 2. Students will contemplate "strength" as a physical and mental characteristic.
 3. Students will reflect on respect for ancestors as evidenced in an Epa performance.
- TIME** 45 minutes
- METHODS**
1. Slide observation and discussion
 2. Creative art activities
- MATERIALS** Slides 11 and 12 projector and screen
Magic markers or crayons, paper, scissors, glue sticks
Collage materials (magazines, newspapers, photos)
Remembrances of ancestors (family photos, letters, clothing)
- HANDOUTS**
- 36: Epa: Oloko (Lord of the Farm) Masquerade
 - 37: Equestrian Epa Color Sheet (K-3)
 - 38: Epa Mask: Oloko (Lord of the Farm)
 - 39: Woman Readyng Epa Mask

BACKGROUND

S
L
I
D
E

1
1

Every year in Yorubaland in Nigeria, masked performers wearing huge wooden headdresses take part in a masquerade known as **Epa** (ee-pah). Epa lasts for many days, honors the dead, and expresses events from history and the hope for farming success.

An Epa mask is a massive headdress made up of a large, full-faced head at the bottom (called the *ikoko* [ee-ko-ko]). The *ikoko* (head) supports images of animals and people and represents the ancestors. The ancestor head is depicted with heavy-lidded, almond-shaped eyes; a broad, accentuated mouth; and a diamond hair pattern, all common Yoruba sculptural features. Family members commission carvers to make an Epa mask, thereby creating a memorial to an ancestor who deserves honor and respect from the family and the entire community. Epa masks are called: *The great ones, the great ones of the family that are now dead.*

When the Epa mask arrives in the town for the masquerade, it is greeted with welcomes, praise names (special words to honor an individual ancestor), and songs by the people (Handout 39).

S
L
I
D
E

1
2

Masks weigh approximately 60 pounds each (Handout 38). Epa masks are worn in dances for an entire day. The dancer must perform without tripping or falling. The stamina necessary to do this shows the strength, perseverance, and power of the dancer, and the ability of the dancer to bear pain (of carrying the heavy mask). Dancing while sustaining a heavy weight on one's head is a test of strength, and people believe this shows who will make an able, strong, and qualified man. The Epa dance is a demonstration of physical strength, and the connection of the dancer with ancestors and other sources of spiritual strength.

This Epa mask represents Oloko (oh-loh-ko), the Lord of the Farm (Handout 36). He is a leopard-warrior, the master of the beasts of the farm. His first duty is to greet the watchful elders. Then, Oloko jumps over a mound of earth, which symbolizes "a tiny bit of the world." If Oloko successfully jumps over the tiny bit of the world (while maintaining his balance and poise), he assures that there will be good farming and hunting for the year. He also shows that the young men of the community have the strength (physical and spiritual) to fulfill their many responsibilities in the coming year.

Epa is a display of strength from the knowledge of present and past, and strength from the life and spirit of the living dancer and the revered ancestor.

DISCUSSION

Describe the mask in your own terms. Write a list of adjectives on the board. Try to think of new words to describe:

- 1. the mask's appearance*
- 2. the person the mask portrays (and what we can know about him or her) and*
- 3. how people in the community probably think about this ancestor, based on how the artist chose to represent the individual.*

Words to describe the mask are strong, heavy, massive, big. The bottom head figure is the ancestor, which appears strong and silent, but present and aware of the events of life.

Rowland Abiodun, a Nigerian scholar, commented on the discipline, strength, and perseverance necessary to perform Epa while wearing the 60-pound mask with this proverb:

One who is carrying eggs has need to be cautious. A fragile plate is never broken by a careful person in public.²⁷

What could he have meant by this?

The mask is very heavy, it takes a lot of physical strength to carry it, and a lot of mental energy to dance with it. One must be careful with something very light and fragile, like an egg, and equally careful with this item, which is heavy and massive. A person must use great care and concentration.

Does this proverb fit other situations? Which ones?

Discuss.

How do you think the Epa dancer might look? What attributes might he have?

The dancer must be strong. He might have very muscular legs and arms, but he must also have great endurance and spiritual strength to dance for the entire day. He has spiritual strength because he is connected to his ancestors; they are his role models.

²⁷ The use of proverbs in the Yoruba language is very important. At a loss for words, a Yoruba person might use a proverb instead. Proverbs enrich verbal communication, and demonstrate a sophisticated way of using language.

Why do you think it is important for the Yoruba to hold ancestors in high regard?

The Yoruba believe their ancestors are their role models. Their ancestors have taught them what they need to know in order to have a good and healthy life.

Who do we revere in our society? Do we have images of them? What is important in our leaders or in people we admire?

We may love and honor family members and keep their photographs near us. Some people revere spiritual or political leaders. Sports figures and movie stars are popularized by the media and idolized by huge audiences.

(Student responses of what is important in leaders/people they admire will vary.)

Is strength important to you?

(Student responses will vary.) Discuss different kinds of strength: physical, mental, spiritual.

A strong body implies a working achievement towards a higher, stronger existence. To carry a heavy weight, a person needs physical strength, strong will, and the ability to endure while under physical and mental stress.

When dancing with the mask, the dancer wears the ancestor upon his head (which symbolizes important lessons from the past). Why do you think the artist created a mask that depicts an ancestor and a hero (Oloko) to be worn on a dancer's head?

The artist may have created the image of an ancestor and a hero to be worn on the dancer's head to give him the combined strength of these entities. Oloko (the leopard-warrior), the ancestor, and the dancer form a union showing a display of strength that springs from the knowledge of the present and past. The dancer's strength represents the strength of the community.

ACTIVITIES

1. Colorful Epa (K-3)

Look at Handout 37 showing the equestrian Epa mask. Originally this Epa headdress was brightly painted red and blue but has faded with the passage of time. Color the Epa headdress in your favorite bright colors, or add the original color back to the mask.

Look at the image of the mask being worn. Talk about what your mask may look like when worn (in motion).

2. Surrounded by Epa

Look at Handout 38 on the Epa: Oloko mask. To begin, draw the outline of the entire mask. After you have done this, separately draw the different components of the mask: the ancestor and the leopard. Cut out the different characters and place them around the room. Talk about the relationship between ancestors and heroes (such as Oloko). Discuss the importance of successful farming (to a farming group of people) and the need for people to fulfill their responsibilities in life.

- Successful dancing of the Epa: Oloko ensures a successful farming year. What year-long activity is important to you? (Examples: finishing the school year, learning a long-term skill such as karate, teaching a younger child how to read).
- What attributes must you have in order to fulfill your responsibilities? As a child? As a young adult?

3. Epa Collage

Work together on a collage. Collect images from media such as magazines, newspapers and photographs, and gather colored papers.

On a large sheet of paper, place images that represent the people who have come before you (such as deceased family members), of whom you have fond memories, or those you feel have helped you in this life. Place these on the bottom tier. This tier represents the *ikoko* (or pot-like head, as seen in Epa masks) of the ancestors.

Above this level of images, place cut-out photos or draw pictures of people who are role models, or people who possess characteristics you wish to emulate (i.e., a spiritual leader may represent goals a person needs or wants; a specific animal may represent important qualities). After you have put these images up, surround these people with special symbols that speak of their prestige or qualities (as persons are surrounded in this Epa).

Discuss the images your class has chosen, and what they mean to the class collectively.

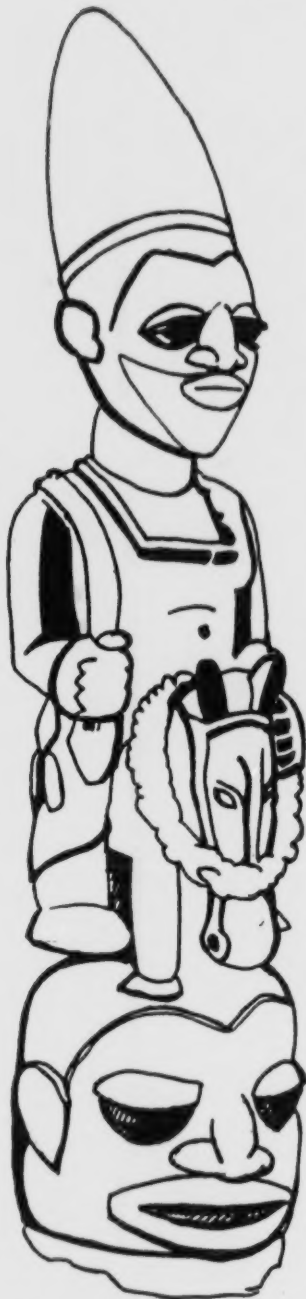
What traits do you wish to emulate in your life? What are important strengths to have?

Place symbols or pictures of yourself below or alongside the mural collage, to symbolize yourself as a "dancer" along their Epa-inspired image.

Handout 37: Equestrian Epa Color Sheet (K-3)

Yoruba, Nigeria

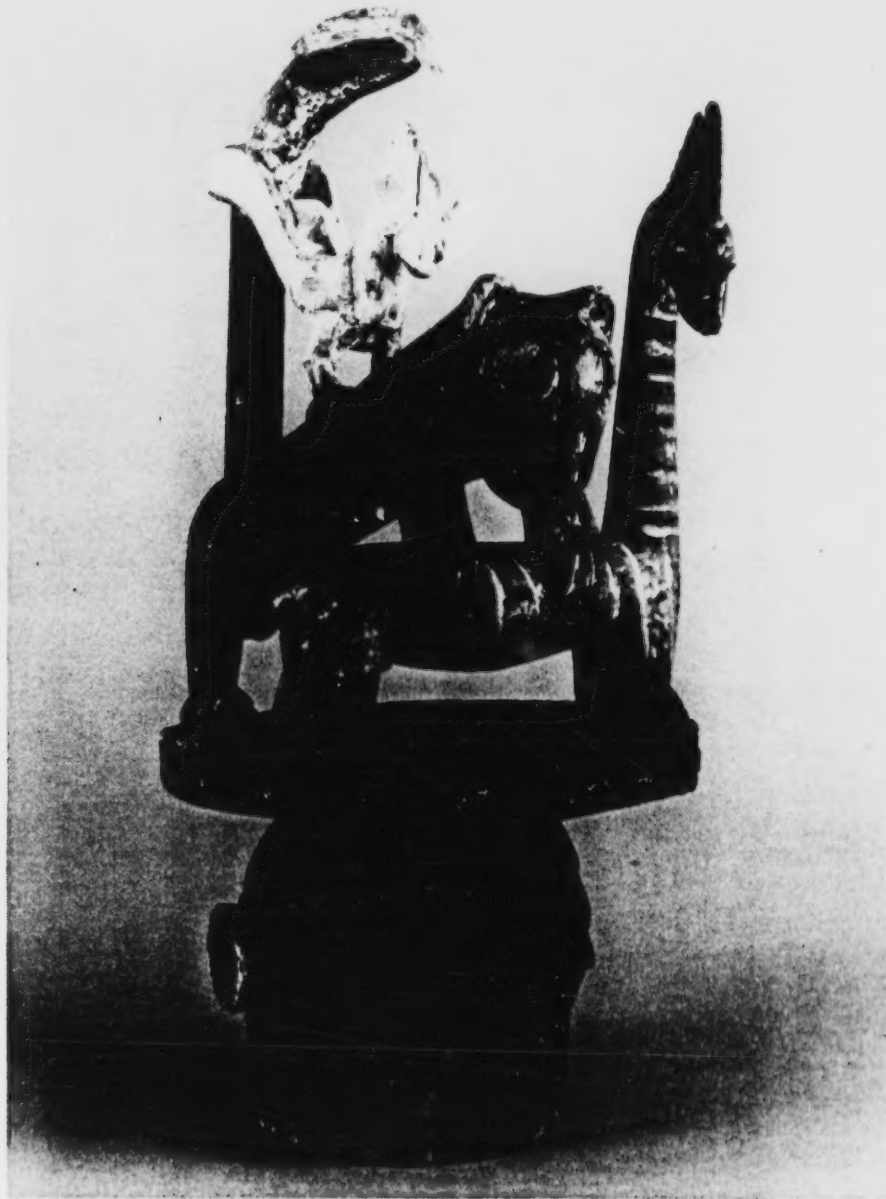
Rowland Abodiun, a scholar from Nigeria, said that when this Epa mask was new, it was painted with brilliant colors. Since then, the bright red and blue colors have faded. As it looks now, its color would not inspire a Yoruba audience. Choose your favorite bright colors to decorate this Epa mask.



Section 2: 141

Handout 38: Epa Mask: Oloko (Lord of the Farm)

Yoruba, Nigeria



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 2: 143

Handout 39: Woman Readyng Epa Mask

Yoruba, Nigeria

This is an Epa headdress carved by a man named Bamgboye, a master carver of Odo-Owa, who lived and worked until 1978. This mask was made for the people of Erinmope, Nigeria. It is named Orangun, the title for the oba of the town Ila-Orangun. It honors the warrior chiefs who founded the "Sixteen Ekiti Kingdoms" of Nigeria.



Photograph taken in Ekiti, Nigeria, in 1974 by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, *Yoruba*, p. 227.

Section 2: 145

Lesson 10: Basinjom: Mask and Gown

Chieftdom of Banyang, Upper Cross River, Cameroon

What do masks do?
How are masks helpful?
Do masks perform work?
How do you think masks can help society?

Handout 40: Basinjom Masquerade in Cameroon

Upper Cross River, Cameroon

Basinjom performing his work in Cameroon.



Photograph by Robert Farris Thompson in Robert Farris Thompson, *African Art in Motion* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), p. 208.

Lesson 10: Basinjom: Mask and Gown

Chiefdom of Banyang, Upper Cross River, Cameroon

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of the costume, discuss the role of Basinjom, and participate in art and discussion activities.

GOAL Students will discuss Basinjom's costume in order to understand how social order is addressed by an entity who instills humility in a person during a masquerade performance.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will describe Basinjom.
2. Students will analyze and discuss the elements that make up the Basinjom ensemble.
3. Students will hypothesize how social mores are reinforced during the Basinjom masquerade.

TIME 50 minutes

METHODS

1. Slide observation and discussion
2. Creative art projects
3. Descriptive and creative writing

MATERIALS Slides 13 and 14, projector and screen
Magazines or newspapers, papier mâché or cardboard
and miscellaneous "found" art objects

HANDOUT

- 40: Basinjom Masquerade in Cameroon
- 41: Basinjom with Attendants
- 42: Basinjom's Complete Ensemble

BACKGROUND

S
L
I
D
E

1
3

The Banyang are agricultural people who live in the hilly countryside near the Cross River in Cameroon. The people there are very close to their families and to their community. They believe it is through personal relationships that an individual is made into a person; in other words, it is through close familial relationships that a person is brought fully into society.

One small part of this community's beliefs are that some people may have a double identity: that which is the self, and that which is an animal spirit of the surrounding forest. Some animal spirits are negative. People who are familiar with the negative animal may be antisocial, irresponsible to the community, and uncooperative. Other animal spirits are neutral. Others are considered dangerous, and are said to represent the actions of people who are destructive towards humankind. Positive animal spirits can give people strength, strength that is used to help the community, not to destroy group unity and solidarity.

The security of an extraordinarily gifted [person] ought not to be built on the insecurity of others.²⁸

In other words, individual strength is best when it takes into consideration the feelings and beings of others in the community. A good person works for the good of others and the overall good of the community.

S
L
I
D
E

1
4

Basinjom (bah'-sehn-johm) is a personality who travels through the villages, often arriving unannounced (Handout 40). Basinjom means "the future brought by God." The Banyang people believe that Basinjom's powers, which work to heal and protect the people, come from God.

In his work, Basinjom walks through town (Handout 41) pointing out people who have been troublesome, and exposing them to their neighbors and to their community. For example, Basinjom confronts people who are deceitful and selfish, two common human shortcomings. When people are irresponsible, or are always thinking in the negative, Basinjom knows this and identifies those people. Basinjom exposes greed and deceit to the community.

Basinjom's head is a composite of clay, herbs, and medicines which give him strength and protect him in his work. Basinjom wears feathers from the blue war bird which give him strength.

²⁸ Thompson, *African Art in Motion*, p. 209.

His mirrored eyes give him the ability to see people's secret thoughts and motivations, as well as strong negative powers that they may be using to harm others. Basinjom's vision has physical and metaphorical properties. Basinjom's mirrored eyes can see anything.

Basinjom holds a special rattle to his ear and can hear the sound evil makes. The rattle is called "power for hearing."

In his right hand he holds a ceremonial iron, called "the knife of vision."

Spread out in front of his chest is the skin of a cat called a genet (jen'-et). He has tufts of raffia at hem and collar resembling the mane of a lion. A weak person should stay away from lions and other strong animals of the forest. His gown is made of deep indigo and black cloth, which helps to keep him hidden from his potential enemies. It is hard to see someone who travels in darkness (Handout 42).

Basinjom begins his work with a dance, accompanied by his attendants. When he drops his gown, his attendants freeze. Then he confronts the person(s) who have shown disruptive behavior. He tells them that they have spoken wrong, unkind words, and committed selfish acts. He asks, "Have you done this?" The person answers "Yes." The person apologizes and asks for forgiveness. The accused give offerings. Basinjom says:

From today I do not want to see any further trouble from your house.²⁹

The person repents and promises never to do the acts again. All is forgiven.

DISCUSSION

Look closely at the slide of Basinjom and describe him. What animal does his nose and face remind you of?

His nose or snout looks like a crocodile. His long mouth is said to "speak for the people."

Describe as much of the clothing as possible.

There is a fan of feathers behind the head, and the body is completely covered with dark cloth, with tufts of raffia fiber along the hems.

²⁹ Thompson, *African Art in Motion*, p. 216.

How could wearing a black cloth protect him from an enemy?

Wearing a dark cloth makes him less noticeable as he travels.

Why do you think the mask is made up of herbs and medicines? Notice the feathers and raffia. These materials (in another art form) denote softness. What do they suggest here?

The herbs and medicines give power and strength to Basinjom. The raffia suggests the mane of a lion, an animal that is known to be strong.

Why does he have mirrored eyes?

The mirrors enable him to see into people's thoughts and specifically, into negative thoughts. The mirrors are a metaphor for knowing what occurs inside of others' imaginations, or what their true motivations are.

As a firefighter works to put out fires and to prevent fires (by educating people about how they start and how to put them out), Basinjom works to stop inappropriate behavior. Basinjom also prevents negative behavior from occurring in the future by letting everyone know the repercussions of their negative actions. He has also been called "the moral police."

Why is Basinjom's role important to the community he works in?

Basinjom helps control the occurrence of behavior that is harmful to other individuals and to the community. He is a judge, a jury, a pronouncer of guilt, the overseer of the confessor, and the watchdog of future occurrences.

Why is it important for him to have protective elements on his clothing?

As a firefighter needs protective clothing to keep from being harmed in a fire, Basinjom needs assistance to protect him from harm.

Can you think of two major reasons for having a Basinjom masquerade?

Basinjom works toward the resolution of conflicts, and he tries to ensure harmony in society by enforcing the rules of good conduct.

ACTIVITIES

1. Draw Basinjom

Draw Basinjom, the implements he holds, or his head. Write a poem about the strength of the item you drew, and how it works to reveal the misdeeds of a person, demand a confession, instill humility, and insist on reform.

2. Strength in Photos

Find photos of popular heroes who are known for strength. Describe their accessories. Do they wear jewelry or fancy or interesting colorful clothes? What does each item symbolize to us, the viewers of these heroes? Compare and contrast to Basinjom.

3. Discussion and a Basinjom Play

Break up into small groups and discuss types of behavior that are negative. Negative behavior can be lawful and unlawful. Think of examples of these: lying, stealing, spreading rumors, robbing a bank, etc.)

What do you imagine Basinjom would do if he saw people doing something from your list of negative behaviors? How is this similar or different to the way in which our society deals with bad conduct? Make up a play to show this. Choose someone to portray Basinjom and several people to be the transgressors and the witnesses.

Basinjom's role is to point out a violation. The transgressor becomes temporarily marked in his or her community. By confessing, one repents, and will think twice about doing a negative action again. Social rules are enforced.

Group activity: Class could make their own version of Basinjom mask and gown with found objects and use it in the play.

The mask could be made with papier-mâché or cardboard. The gown could be made of newspapers or a long coat decorated with appropriate symbols to parallel the Basinjom costume.

Handout 41: Basinjom with Attendants

Upper Cross River, Cameroon



Basinjom lets his gown drop, freezing his army (of attendants).

Photograph by Robert Farris Thompson in Thompson, *African Art in Motion*,
p. 216.

Section 2: 155

Handout 42: Basinjom's Complete Ensemble

Upper Cross River, Cameroon



Basinjom's clothes and accessories from Cameroon, now in the Seattle Art Museum.

Seattle Art Museum photograph.

Section 2: 157

Section 3: Art for Gods and Spirits

Introduction

Faith is important to every society on earth. A people's spiritual life (what some may call religion or faith) is among the most durable and powerful forces in human society. Throughout time, people all over the world have had a belief in a higher power and other spiritual forces. Every religion has serious beliefs that are real to the individuals and to their society. In order to understand an idea fully it is important to try to see a belief system on its own terms.

All of the world's religions contain intellectual, mystical, and symbolic thoughts and actions. For example, if there is a shrine in a tree, people do not mistake the tree for a deity, or worship the tree. They use the tree as a symbol of, or a conduit to, what is spiritual and sacred to them.

One way that people pay devotion to their beliefs is by recognizing sacred places. A sacred place may be an overlook in canyon lands, a bank along a river, a special recognizable area in the forest, or a place where an important event took place. Sacred areas may also be architectural in nature, as in churches, mosques, synagogues, and shrines. In all parts of the world, there are sacred grounds, shrines, and churches.

In some places in West Africa, there are two types of shrines: those erected for deities and those for the ancestors. Shrines erected to ancestors serve to remember and venerate people who have passed on. They also recall the lessons and examples the ancestors taught. Ancestor shrines tell stories about specific people who lived before. In some instances, people can look at their shrines and remember thirty or forty generations in their family history. In *Ile Ori* (House of the Head) and *Ivri*, shrines are used to create and ensure balance in life and to promote a clear and positive destiny. The *Eshu Staff* is a reminder of the powers of fate and how bad luck brings us closer to our guardian helpers. The *Mother with Twins* speaks of the positive role model of an individual nurturing person, was created as a memorial to the deceased, and placed in a shrine.

No matter what name or title we give to it, spirituality is the fundamental, basic, and ultimate belief that shapes our thinking, our lives, and our society. It is often represented in art because it is so important to the individual and to the community.

Section 3: Art for Gods and Spirits

A. Introduction/Evaluation Questions

- Lesson 11. What have you heard about traditional African religion?
What do some people in Africa believe?
- Lesson 12. Do you think about your own fate and destiny in life?
How might a person in Africa think of his or her fate or destiny?
- Lesson 13. What is a shrine?
How does a shrine function?
- Lesson 14. Who is honored in a shrine?

B. West African Art Objects Examined in Answer to the Above Questions

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lesson 11. Yoruba, Nigeria | Ogo Elegba:
Eshu (eh'-shoo) Staff |
| Lesson 12. Yoruba, Nigeria | <i>Ile Ori</i> (il-lee or-ee)
(House of the Head) |
| Lesson 13. Urhobo, Nigeria | <i>Ivri</i> (ee-vree)
(Community Shrine Figure) |
| Lesson 14. Fante, Ghana | Mother with Twins |

Lesson 11: Ogo Elegba: Eshu Staff

Yoruba, Nigeria

What have you heard about African traditional religion?

What do some people in Africa believe?

Are there religions in Africa?

- ones you have heard of?
- ones you have never heard of?

Handout 43: A Devotee of Eshu Carries Her Shrine

Yoruba, Nigeria

A devotee of Eshu carries her shrine during the annual festival for Eshu in the town of Ila-Orangun, Nigeria. The Eshu shrine has many black seed pods and cowrie shells (a symbol of wealth and prestige) cascading down the figure. This suggests the wealth and good fortune that Eshu may bring to people.



Photograph by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, *Yoruba*, p. 29.

Section 3: 162

Lesson 11: Ogo Elegba: Eshu Staff

Yoruba, Nigeria

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of the Eshu staff, describe and discuss its meaning and use, discuss the importance of balance in Yoruba society, and participate in art and/or poetry activities.

- GOAL** Students will understand the use of the Eshu staff in order to understand how an art object functions as a visual expression of spiritual goals and the processes used to attain those goals.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will describe Eshu as represented in a sculpture.
 2. Students will discuss balance as a spiritual goal in Yoruba society and the philosophy of how chaos can invoke calm in a person's life.
 3. Students may create parallels between their own beliefs about spirit helpers and the concept of Eshu.
- TIME** One hour
- METHODS**
1. Slide discussion and observation
 2. Creative art projects
 3. Descriptive and creative writing
- MATERIALS** Slides 15 and 16, projector and screen
Magazines, paper, scissors, glue sticks
- HANDOUTS**
- 43: A Devotee of Eshu Carries Her Shrine
 - 44: Third-Ranking Priestess Holding Eshu Figure
 - 45: Eshu Staff

BACKGROUND

S
L
I
D
E
S

1
5
&

1
6

In Yorubaland, there is a spirit known as **Eshu** (eh'-shoo). He is represented in this staff. Eshu is one of the many Yoruba deities who represents different activities and interests. Yoruba people may associate themselves with many different but very specific deities in order to obtain a special type of help from them (Handout 43).

Eshu is known as the heavenly messenger, the facilitator, a transformer, and the one who stimulates. Eshu is also called the trickster: the trickster theme is common in African folklore. He is unpredictable, he is full of contradictions, he is magical and has the power to cause many things to happen. His paradoxical nature is expressed in the following poem:

*Eshu slept in the house
But the house was too small for him
Eshu slept on the veranda
But the veranda was too small for him
Eshu slept in a nut
At last he could stretch himself out.
Beier 1959:15³⁰*

Eshu makes certain that the appropriate prayers and their associated rituals are performed regularly and in the proper manner. He may give riches to people who follow the sacrificial way, but steals from people who do not. He is known as the gift giver, "the child of cowries" (cowries are a sign of wealth). Eshu intercedes on behalf of people in their prayers and requests to other spiritual beings, if he is afforded the proper respect. If Eshu is not respected, he will jumble the prayer message before it reaches its intended audience. Eshu becomes very angry when he is not treated well or if he is ignored. When he is angry, he brings chaos and everything goes wrong.

*He turns quickly and walks quickly.
When he is angry, he hits a stone until it bleeds.
Verger 1957:117³¹*

³⁰ John Pemberton III, "Eshu-Elegba: The Yoruba Trickster God," *African Arts Magazine* (October 1975), p. 25.

³¹ Pemberton, "Eshu-Elegba," *African Arts Magazine*, p. 25.

Eshu's power allows him to choose whether he will or will not restrain evil spirits from harming someone; he chooses whether or not to inform the other deities when a prayer offering has been made to them; he chooses if this offering will bring the person prosperity or if it will not. He is the guardian of the ritual way, and therefore keeps order.

*Eshu rides a great horse and examines matters like the Almighty.*³²

Eshu has other important work for many purposes. He uses his powers to create problems or chaos in the lives of the people. He creates mischief for one very important reason: It is through upset in their lives that people will turn to the spiritual helpers. Prayers, offerings, and contact with spirit helpers, it is believed, makes it possible for people to live balanced, harmonious, full lives. In other words, without trouble, the people would forget to be close to their ties in the spirit world. It is distress in life that keeps people on the right path and in communication with their strength-givers and life-helpers. Eshu's disruptions may remind devotees of what is right and wrong in their lives, and the ritual way that must be followed in order to return to a peaceful path.

By acting in a contradictory way and by provoking people, Eshu illustrates that no one, anywhere, at any time, can know anything with absolute certainty. Even though life is uncertain, Eshu reminds people that there is hope for change and order in life, if they fulfill their duties and perform the proper prayers and ceremonies (Handout 44).

The following is a chant an Ifa priest could recite about Eshu:³³

*The world is broken into pieces;
The world is split wide open,
The world is broken without anybody to mend it;
The world is split open without anybody to sew it.
Cast Ifa³⁴ for the six elders
Who were coming down from Ile Ife. (Ife = Nigeria)
They were asked to take care of Mole.
They were told that they would do well*

³² Pemberton, "Eshu-Elegba," *African Arts Magazine*, p. 26.

³³ Abimbola 1970: vol. II Ose Meji, chapter 5, from "Eshu-Elegba," *African Arts Magazine*, p. 67.

³⁴ Ifa: Ifa may refer to Orunmila (the ruler of knowledge, and the ruler of priests), or to the Odu of Ifa (the Odu is a set of 256 images or patterns; each refers to an immense number of prayers).

*If they made sacrifice. (Performed a ritual)
If the sacrifice of Eshu is not made,
It will not be acceptable (in heaven).*

When the above story talks about the world being broken, it is talking about the confusion that came to be on earth. Chaos reigned because the elders did not perform the proper rites and prayers. Without prayer and sacrifice, spiritual obligations are not met. All falls into disorder and "the world is broken."

Later on in the story, men who tried to restore harmony to the broken world are ridiculed and compared to a person who tries to fix a torn garment with a spider's web.

DISCUSSION

Describe Eshu.

Note the patterning of his hair, the cowrie shells about his neck, the human figure in his left hand, the scarification patterns on his face, and his hair extension (Handout 45).

Eshu's long-tailed hair projects away from the staff. It suggests the passageway between this life and the next, between our earth and the spirit world. Why do you think the artist wanted to show us that?

Eshu's work is to guard the prayers and ceremonies. He stands between the offerings people on earth make and the spiritual helpers, as his hair extension seems to travel from one plane to the next.

What do you think cowrie shells symbolize?

Cowries were used as currency and to express wealth and strength. When they appear on an art object, they show that the artist believed the character represented is very significant and influential. Also, the artist is showing us that Eshu may bring great power and wealth to his devotees.

What had to be considered by the artist when making this staff?

The artist who created this staff did so only after much thought, planning, and design work. For example, one must find a way to make a sculpture pleasant to look at from all viewing angles. The

artist had to take into consideration some very important ideas about life and spirituality when he or she was making the staff. The artist found ways to represent cultural and spiritual concepts in a visual and symbolic way. The artist used the cowries to show that this is an important being. The elaborate hair design and scar patterns on his face indicate Eshu is a distinguished being.

This sculpture of Eshu is symbolically showing us many things (Handout 45). Think about the concepts that the Eshu sculpture may be showing us:

- 1) the need for balance in life, (by bringing chaos to obtain a balance, which is peace)
- 2) that there are higher powers evident in this world
- 3) that a person must work to remain spiritually healthy (as Eshu guides and guards the ritual way)
- 4) that a person needs to remember and stay focused on his or her life's goals (by adhering to the proper rituals, knowing that there is much uncertainty in life)
- 5) that chaos or trouble can be good, when it brings us closer to our spiritual force and to our work in life

What is Eshu doing when he creates chaos for someone?

Eshu is enticing the individual to become closer to his or her spirit helpers.

How do sacrifice, prayer, and the performance of rituals preserve harmony in life?

Proper adherence to ritual provides order in the universe and order in society, and ensures that one's way through life is good.

Is it bad to have trouble in one's life, according to the point of view of Eshu and his work?

Yes and no. Yes, trouble is bad, but no, it is not so bad because it is through trouble that we remain close to the spirits (our God or spirit helpers) who assist us.

In this sculpture, Eshu stands balanced. How does this represent balance in life?

A stable stance, as shown in this work of art, could be related to social stability, balance, and harmony in life.

In a philosophical sense, can you see how chaos in a person's life may be seen as a "blessing" or as a spiritual gift?

Yes, it can be seen as a positive thing because it brings someone in communication with their spirit helper.

How do you find out about art that has a religious or spiritual significance in your life?

Our families, spiritual leaders, and teachers guide us.

How do you think Yoruba children learn about their art?

They learn from their family members, from teachers in school, from their spiritual leaders.

Can you tell stories about spiritual art in your home, at school, or in the neighborhood?

Discuss.

What rituals are important to you and your family? What makes the rituals special?

Discuss.

ACTIVITIES

1. Poetry, Short Stories

In autobiographies, people speak about the events of their lives, and often, the things which were difficult for them to deal with. They also talk about what helped them through difficult life passages.

Write a fictional or autobiographical poem or short story about a difficult problem, and what helped you or the character in your poem or story through that difficult time. (Teachers may want to provide examples.) Try to address the concept of balance in your written piece. At the end of the story, think about whether or not your character is a better person because of the experience. What do you think?

Get together in small groups and discuss Eshu, and the way in which he performs his work.

2. Collage

Think about how artists represent religious concepts in their work. Gather images from world religious beliefs, such as pictures of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, Catholic saints. Research the different personages represented in your collection. Are there symbols associated with them, and what do they mean?

Draw images of spiritual being(s) who you believe help you in your daily life.

Do we have stories of tricksters which we share in our country?

Brer Rabbit, Anansi the Spider.

Do trickster personalities teach us important life lessons? How?

Discuss.

3. Activity

Eshu has calabashes attached to his hair and they contain many different medicines and charms that enable him to put people to sleep, to become invisible, or to transform himself into another creature.³⁵

Invent a new "trickster" character. Name it, draw what it looks like, and describe its characteristics. Then, write or act out a scene from a play or movie that involves the trickster. This could also be shown through a storytelling performance or a puppet show.

Set up a situation that involves the positive and negative influences of the trickster. Involve the audience in the mischief and miracles created by an ambiguous, inspiring character.

³⁵ Pamela McClusky, *Praise Poems: The Katherine White Collection* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1984), p. 59.

Handout 44: Third-Ranking Priestess Holding Eshu Figure

Yoruba, Nigeria



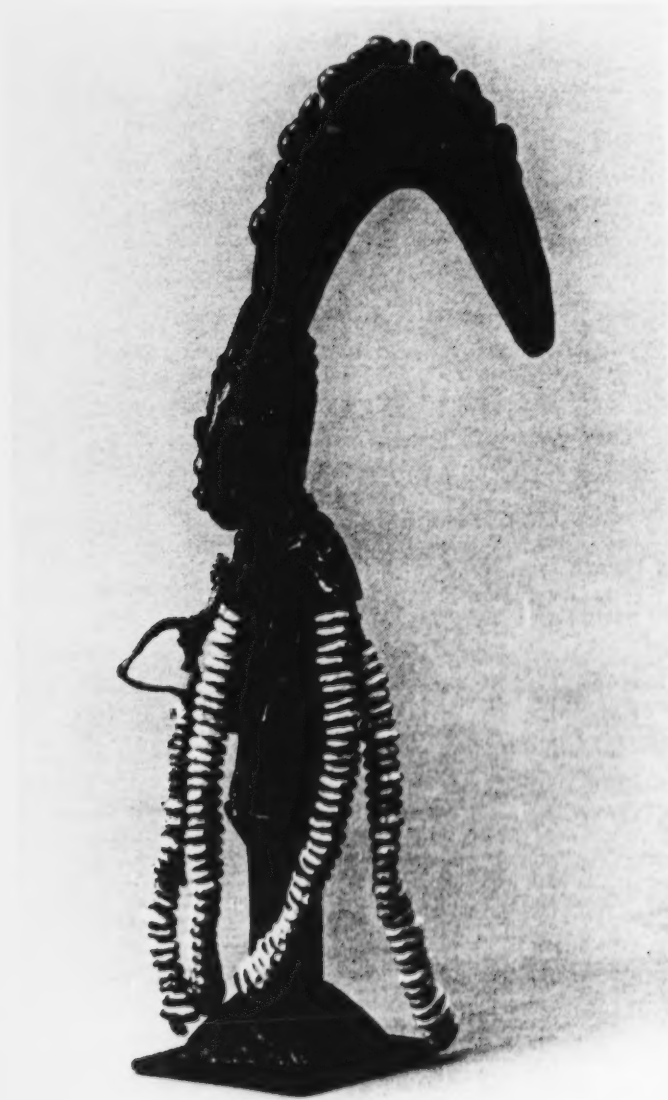
[This is] the most important Eshu figure in Ila-Orangun, held by Arugba, the third ranking priestess. During the annual festival, cowries, a three color cap, and a packet are attached to the figure. Seated in the basin, it will be placed in a prominent spot in the Eshu shrine.³⁶

Photograph by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, "Eshu-Elegba," *African Arts Magazine*, p. 25.

³⁶ Pemberton, "Eshu-Elegba," *African Arts Magazine*, p. 25.

Handout 45: Eshu Staff

Yoruba, Nigeria



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 3: 173

Lesson 12: *Ile Ori* (House of the Head)

Yoruba, Nigeria

Do you think about your own fate and destiny in life?

-Who you will be like?

-What goals do you have?

-What will happen to you?

How might a person in Africa think about the concepts of fate or destiny?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Handout 46: *Ile Ori*



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 3: 176

Lesson 12: *Ile Ori* (House of the Head)

Yoruba, Nigeria

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of *ile ori* (house of the head) and discuss the concept of art as a representation of individual identity, personal destiny, and fate. Students participate in creative art projects and writing activities.

- GOAL** Students will understand the concept of destiny as represented in art in order to understand the use and basic meaning of the *ile ori*.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will describe the aesthetic components that make up the *ile ori*.
 2. Students will discuss how the *ile ori* is used.
 3. Students will analyze and compare the concept of destiny and its relationship to an individual's anatomical head.
- TIME** 45 minutes
- METHODS**
1. Slide observation and discussion
 2. Creative art projects
 3. Descriptive and creative writing
- MATERIALS** Slide 17, projector and screen
A variety of "found art" materials, paper and pens, glue
Optional: scrapbook materials, camera, cassette tape recorder and tapes
- HANDOUTS**
- 46: *Ile Ori*
 - 47: *Eulipian I* by Bert Samples

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Section 3: 177

BACKGROUND

SLIDE

17

The Eshu Staff Lesson (3:163) explained that balance in life is a very important concept for the Yoruba people of Nigeria. If people forget to pray and perform religious rituals, chaos may break out in their lives and in the world. The work it takes to resolve the chaos brings one closer to his or her spiritual base. In *ile ori* (house of the head), individuals are reminded and invited to achieve balance. This enables them to find peace and fulfill their personal destinies.

Ile ori is a personal shrine (Handout 46). The outer architecture symbolizes the physical head. It embraces a leather cone (that we cannot see) which symbolizes the inner head. The artist Bert Samples has remarked on this *ile ori* phenomenon in his work *Eulipian I* (Handout 47). A person's *ori* is crucial to a successful life; support and guidance from *ori* is essential. This is why personal *ori* shrines are found in many homes.

The Yoruba people believe in an inner head and an outer head. The outer head is the physical head people can see (called the *ori ita*) and the inner head (called the *ori inu*) is unseen. The inner head is the spiritual essence of the person and the controller of destiny and fate. Inner head qualities include inner peace, self-control, patience, and understanding. Outer head qualities are the physical characteristics (your face, ears, hair, etc.) that others see.

Here is one prayer to an *ile ori*:

Ori inu mi ko ma ba ti ode je.

(May my inner head not spoil my outer one.)

The inner head is said to contain parts of the ancestors, a person's potential and limitations—everything that plays an important role in one's life. Together, the workings of the inner and outer head speak of the accomplishments and good fortune that come from a life well-lived.

Before being born on this earth, an individual sees *Ajala*, the person in heaven responsible for making heads (*ori*). Sometimes *Ajala* is a little absent-minded, and may give an individual a head that is imperfect. This will guarantee a difficult fate, as the head is the center of an individual's spiritual power. When a baby is born, the Knowing the Head ceremony is one of the first to occur. During this special service, a priest helps to determine if the child comes from the mother's side, from the father's side, or from a specific deity.

If one is afraid bad luck is coming, or if bad luck occurs, one may seek backing and direction from his or her own personal inner head. When confronted by a problem caused by a selfish and cynical individual, a person can ask his or her inner head to take up the fight (*ori mi ja fun mi*).³⁷

The struggle to find balance is often fought from within, but also with outside influences that have the potential to do harm. Traditional Yoruba use spiritual forces, among other methods, to remain in balance.

Ile ori is about the privacy and uniqueness of a person, which is honored by the sculpture. It is also honored when children are given special names to indicate their qualities and potential. These names may make reference to a person's family history (by mentioning ancestors), or may convey their pride in positive achievement. Most often, names and personal information like this are kept private, to be shared only among family and close friends. Protecting the privacy of the inner being ensures one's well-being and vitality.

DISCUSSION

Describe the ile ori (Handout 46).

The house of the head is made of vertical leather panels trimmed in cowrie shells. The house is divided into three tiers. On top is an equestrian figure, dressed in red cloth and a leather hat. The horse is covered with cowries and has saddle bags. The ile ori is a leather and cowrie shell structure encasing a smaller art object that symbolizes a person's inner head (destiny). The ile ori looks like an encasement, or a shelter, for something to be placed inside of it (the inner head). It looks protective and strong. The object that symbolizes ori (the inner head) looks like a leather cone. It is placed inside of the ori shrine. (We cannot see it in this slide, as it is protected by the shrine.)

Describe the figure on top of ile ori. Why do you think there are cowrie shells on this object?

³⁷ There is a song entitled "*Ori Mi Ja Fun Mi*" by Nigerian superstar Sunny Ade. In the song, he composed and played juju music about *ori*. At one time when he was hospitalized, he begged his inner head to fortify him, because he was so ill and close to death. His prayer worked, and he lived.

At the top of the structure we see a horseman holding a staff or spear, which is an expression of bravery. The figure, balanced over the cowrie shells (an accessory of nobility and wealth), symbolizes balance and harmony within a person's destiny and life.

Cowrie shells are special prestige items. The ile ori is covered with cowrie shells; this shows the importance of the house of the inner head.

How and why do you think the ile ori speaks specifically of two heads (the inner head and the outer head)? How does this relate to the need for balance in life?

According to Yoruba philosophy, human beings have an inner head and an outer head. Ile ori has an inner head, which symbolizes destiny, and the outer head, which everyone sees. The inner and the outer head remain together and balanced. One protects the other.

The individual who owns the ile ori shrine prays while viewing the shrine in order to think about the things which influence their fate. Ile ori speaks about balance in life. Ile ori houses the person's destiny (or head, as in house of the head). Balance in life is important to reaching one's potential, and the inner and outer ile ori may relate to the inner and outer person. How is this significant?

External appearances are sometimes different from what a person is like inside. A person must know him or herself to be balanced in life and to fulfill their destinies.

Privacy (one's inner beliefs and inner being) must be understood and afforded respect to ensure well-being.

Balance and destiny are key concepts in ile ori. What does that mean to you?

Perhaps, a positive future depends upon balance in a person's life. The unique nature of a person is acknowledged in this work of art.

Individual gifts and personality traits are also recognized and honored. For example, Yoruba children are given special names to express their individual qualities and potential.

Some people may say there is a difference between an inner and an outer self. Do you think this could be true?

"Looks can be deceiving," or "Don't judge a book by its cover" are sayings in our culture that reflect this theme.

Why would a person have a shrine to his or her head (destiny)?

It is important to know yourself. Knowing our own personal identities helps us to have centered and balanced lives, which we present to others for the collective good of our community.

How is privacy maintained in the United States?

Discuss.

What abilities might be important to develop to achieve balance in your life?

The ability to make sound decisions and to be responsible.

(Teachers could lead students in discussion of situation ethics, set up hypothetical situations that require sound decision-making, and give students the opportunity to make decisions.)

How do you view your destiny? What is your idea of success? If you desire personal and professional success, what qualities and habits might be desirable?

Discuss.

Examples: Practice taking intelligent risks. Be a good speaker and a good listener. Understand your feelings and know your values. Be a planner and get good grades. Set goals for yourself. Be a reader. Be interested in learning in and out of school. Be curious about the world and explore how you can help shape it.

Can you make decisions in your life now that might influence your destiny? What could you do now to help you reach your goals or attain your dreams?

High grades, community service, or sports achievement could lead to scholarships. Involvement in extra-curricular activities could develop leadership skills. Learn about vocational choices and pursue part-time or volunteer work in a specific field.

(Teachers could discuss many issues here.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Discussion and Art Lesson

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TEACHER: After presenting the lesson, take a few minutes to ask the students what things they feel represent help or guidance in their life (destiny). How would they integrate these in a work of art?

How is privacy maintained in your life? Can you think of things that only you, your close friends, or your family share? Is there information that is available only to close friends and/or family members?

Think of something private between you and another person. Find a way to represent this in art. You can create a still life, a mural, or a small sculpture compiled from found objects. This work of art you are creating is to become the embodiment of some type of personal information, of which only you know the meaning.

After you create this object, show it to one other person or the class (at your discretion). Ask them what the object means to them. How can they learn about the object?

Notice that they only know the meaning of the object if:

- 1. They are close to you.*
- 2. They ask the right questions.*
- 3. You choose to answer the questions.*
- 4. They are willing to perform research and to acknowledge your point of view in order to understand.*

2. A Shrine for Destiny

Create a shrine from found objects. Pick one object to represent your individual traits (your inner head). Surround this object with items to protect it, enshrine it, honor it, and keep it safe.

3. Be a Newspaper Reporter

Interview yourself at the age of 30. Write a column about it. What do people say about you? How did your destiny work out? What steps can you take in your life *now* and in the future that will shape the kind of adult (or senior citizen) you will be?

4. Destiny and Metaphor

In what ways is your life like a _____? (Example: boat, airplane, crocodile, flower, bird?) How can you relate your life, or destiny, in a **metaphor**, as life and destiny related in the *ile ori*? Create metaphors for your life and illustrate them.

5. Need More To Do?

Write a poem to express private feelings.

Take a photograph or series of photographs (or make a video) reflecting private thoughts or moods.

Keep a diary reflecting secret thoughts.

Make a scrapbook that tells the story of a special friendship or relationship.

Write a song (and tape-record it) that describes the special feelings you have for someone.

Handout 47: *Eulipian I* by Bert Samples



This self-portrait from 1989 shows the mind, spirit, and inner self enshrined in an architectural form. The relation of the head and a house shows:

the notion of ordered thought which leads to an ordered life.

The ancient Yoruba believed the spirit of God is in a person's head, and is in the form of a bird. Bird is linked with a human's gift to perform supernatural acts, and the fulfillment of a high degree of spirituality. Spirituality is something gained by one who has an ordered, clear, open, and strong mind. The word "Eulipian" is from the song by Rashaan Roland Kirk and means "journey agent."

Black Ancestral Legacy (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1989), p. 168.

Section 3: 185

Lesson 13: *Ivri* (Community Shrine Figure)

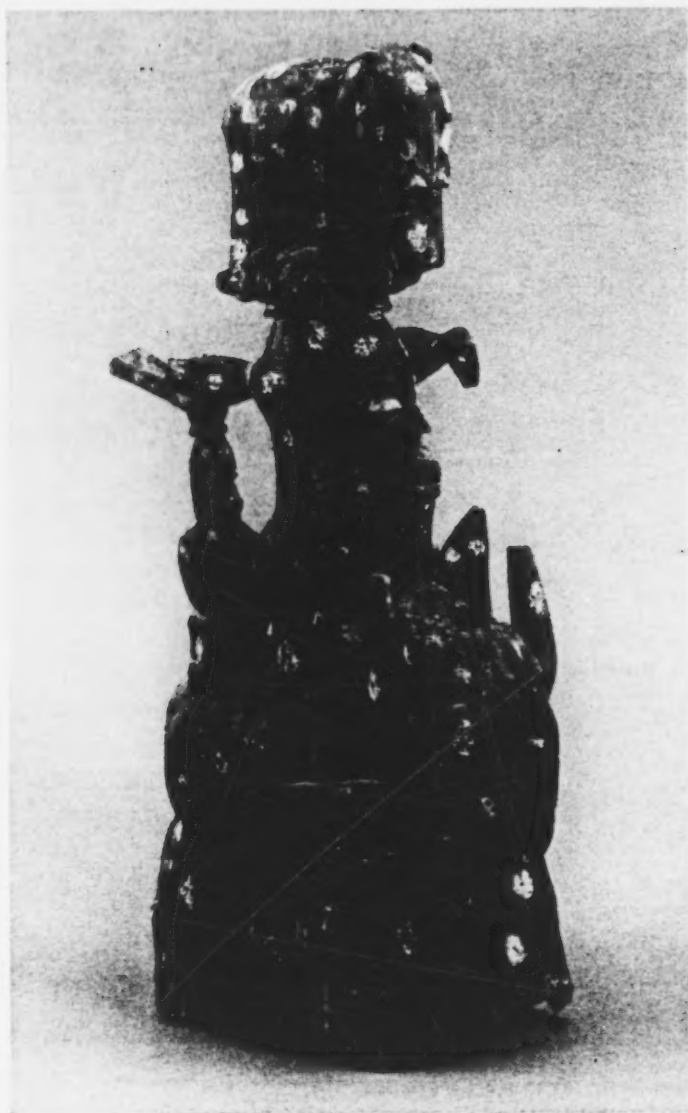
Urhobo, Nigeria

What is a shrine?
How does it function?
Do people worship shrines or the principles the
shrines embody?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Handout 48: *Ivri*

Urhobo, Nigeria



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 3: 188

Lesson 13: *Ivri* (Community Shrine Figure)

Urhobo, Nigeria

Summary of the Lesson

Students view a slide of the *ivri*, discuss its use and meaning, and participate in art and writing activities.

GOAL Students will examine the *ivri* in order to understand how a shrine figure addresses the problems and uses of an individual's aggression.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will describe the *ivri* shrine figure.
2. Students will discuss how an *ivri* shrine figure is used.
3. Students will create visual metaphors for their own views on individual aggression.

TIME 50 minutes

METHODS

1. Handout discussion and observation
2. Creative art projects
3. Descriptive and creative writing

MATERIALS Slide 18, projector and screen
Paper and pens

HANDOUTS 48: *Ivri*
49: *Ivri* (close-up)

BACKGROUND

SLIDE

18

The Urhobo are a group of people who live in a collection of villages near the Benin Kingdom (Nigeria).

The *ivri* (ee-vree) is a personal or community shrine. People refer to their *ivri* and make offerings to it, in order to keep aggression in balance.

The *ivri* is a wooden composite figure of animal and human forms (Handout 48). At the base is a four-legged animal, with four large teeth. The animal supports a representation of the owner and his family (or attendants). A man (seated on his guardian figure) rests on the animal's back. At both sides are two smaller individuals who wear birds on their heads. The large central figure is wearing an animal on his head. The individuals in the shrine represent both the positive and the negative sides of personal and group aggression. According to the Yoruba people, when humankind was created, God breathed into human beings. The spirit of God is in the form of a bird. This powerful symbol of bird shows that the higher powers of the brain are visible. It is the higher powers of the mind—the essence of God—that are stronger than evil or any enemies. "Evil" however, is often our own insecurities, is a part of ourselves, our minds, and must be controlled. *Ivri* is an art object that speaks of an individual's control over negativity, or aggression. In this context, conquering negative forces (evil) is the mind's most important work.

An *ivri* would be made for someone who was having trouble coping with their aggression, such as by having difficulties in getting along with others, and being unwilling to share, give to others or to the community, or compromise. He or she might be experiencing misfortune in life. The *ivri* would be a helper, reminding the individual of the obligation to remain centered or balanced and not to be too selfish, aggressive, or argumentative. Too much stubbornness, tenacity, and belligerence is dangerous for an individual and for the community, but so is too little.

An owner of an *ivri* must "feed" it in a real way and in a symbolic ceremonial fashion. *Ivri* is given offerings of yams, gin, chicken blood, and kola nuts. It is during the ceremonial feeding of the *ivri* that the owner thinks about difficulties with aggression and poor conduct. The food offered to *ivri* represents negative energies; *ivri* is able to take aggression, and in its large, cavernous mouth, consume it. *Ivri* is hungry for food, and as it is fed, it is symbolically consuming aggression (Handout 49). It is, in fact, not only consuming it and taking it away from where it may do harm, it is rechannelling it into positive energies.

When *ivri* is fed and acknowledged in the proper way, it is satisfied, and ensures the owner's aggression is in place, balanced, and checked. *Ivri* reminds a person to work hard and to persevere to achieve desires, but not to the extent that his or her actions disrupt other people's lives.

The *ivri* helps in other ways as well. Long ago, communities that needed protection from the slave raiders would consult their *ivri* for protection. A forgetful person would request help to find lost items; someone who had an item stolen would ask the *ivri* to have it returned. The *ivri* helps a warrior channel his aggression in preparation for battle. The *ivri* can do many things.

DISCUSSION

Look closely. Describe the ivri. What patterns do you see on the surface?

Red and white dots. The white symbolizes purity, and red represents fertility.

Why do you think fertility and purity are represented?

To have a centered life, one must not let aggression overtake one's will, so that life can be harmonious. Purity may mean the ability to be honest with one's self, by having pure and true thoughts. Fertility may mean the ability to grow and be healthy, not only in the physical way, but in a spiritual way as well.

How are the eyes represented? What shapes are they? Are they different from each other, or the same? What about the noses and the mouths?

*The eyes are heavy-lidded, crescent-shaped, and circular. There is a wide snout on the bottom creature, a narrow long nose with a ridge on the top creature. The four-legged *ivri* has a huge mouth.*

Why do you think the eyes are the same or different?

*The bird's eyes and nose are different from the human's features. Perhaps different facial features are created to show different types of beings or animals, or different essences of creatures. The bird image may represent the essence of God in humans; among the *Urhobo*, the bird is representative of the spirit of God in people. The den-like mouth reminds them to fill it with their excess aggression.*

Why do you think there are so many people on the large animal's back?

Perhaps they symbolize the many functions of the ivri.

It is hard to think of someone who is able to re-channel aggression in our society. Think of aggressive characters in our media. Who are they? What characterizes them as aggressive?

In the movie Terminator 2, Arnold Schwarzenegger plays an android with super-human qualities. He has clenched teeth, tight fists, and a muscular body. In this fictional role, his aggressive character functions to help a specific individual, and subsequently all of humanity. The character has the potential to help the community by his work.

What characterizes the ivri as aggressive?

The ivri is made of big block construction, somewhat akin to the big block-like construction of a body builder. Its large mouth with bared teeth represents hunger and its ability to consume.

How can you tell this image is considered powerful?

It has a very imposing appearance. The big mouth with huge teeth (which extend past its face) grabs your attention. It seems to be an active animal force.

Is aggression always bad? Can you think of "good" aggression?

No. Aggression has its place in life. It may take the form of assertiveness, self-confidence, or hard work towards a common goal. Aggression may be used to protect yourself or others from harm. Too much aggression is bad, and so is too little.

How is too little aggression undesirable?

It is often said that life is a struggle. Too much passivity may allow other forces to take over, or may keep us from fulfilling our life's destiny. A person must be strong to work and be healthy.

Does the ivri portray the need to strike a balance between "good" and "bad" or the positive and the negative?

Aesthetically, the figures stacked on top of one another allude to balance. More importantly, the ritual acts associated with the ivri illustrate the need for balance to the person honoring the ivri.

What point was the artist trying to make by making the ivri look powerful?

That this work of art or shrine is strong and able to do its work.

ACTIVITIES

1. The following is a poem from the Urhobo people for the *ivri*. It speaks of the *ivri* potential.³⁸ (The capitalized words are the original poem, the words in italics are suggested questions and/or answers to use in understanding the poem's meaning.)

PROTECT THE WORLDS

(Which worlds? The spiritual and the earthly).

ONE SITS FIRMLY

(Solid base. Centered. Standing your ground.)

SO THAT YOU CAN PROTECT THE WORLD

(Protection = safety, assurance)

AS YOU PROTECT BOTH YOUNGER AND OLDER CHILDREN

(Protect all people)

WARNING: BEING WORRIED BY HUNGER BRINGS VEXATION

(One must eat. Eating is a metaphor for a hunger for aggression, as ivri consumes excess aggression.)

HUNGER MAKES YOU SAY WHAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND

(Not eating or not keeping your aggression in check makes a person ill.)

WARNING: THIS IS THE KOLA³⁹ FOR HIM

(Kola is an offering.)

2. Discussion and Poetry

Ivri is a shrine; it has a special spiritual role in its community. Do we have any protectors that help us keep aggression in check?

³⁸ W. Perkins Foss, *The Arts of the Urhobo Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, M.A. thesis, Yale University (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1976), p. 287.

³⁹ The word kola is short for kola nut. Kola nut is a juicy, crunchy, fruit-like produce that contains caffeine. It is used in special ceremonies and in traditional prayers. It is also commonly used as many use coffee to stimulate themselves when they awaken. In the context of this poem, kola nut is used as a special offering for vexation control.

Are there any examples in our popular culture that show the danger of unchecked aggression?

Violent films (horror), newscasts that discuss violent crime. Police and the criminal justice system help keep law and order and try to restrict unhealthy aggression.

Are there any examples from daily life where aggression is harnessed and produces some positive result?

Sports (football, tennis, racquetball, basketball).

Knowing what you do about aggression and the other powers of *ivri*, write a poem about one of the following:

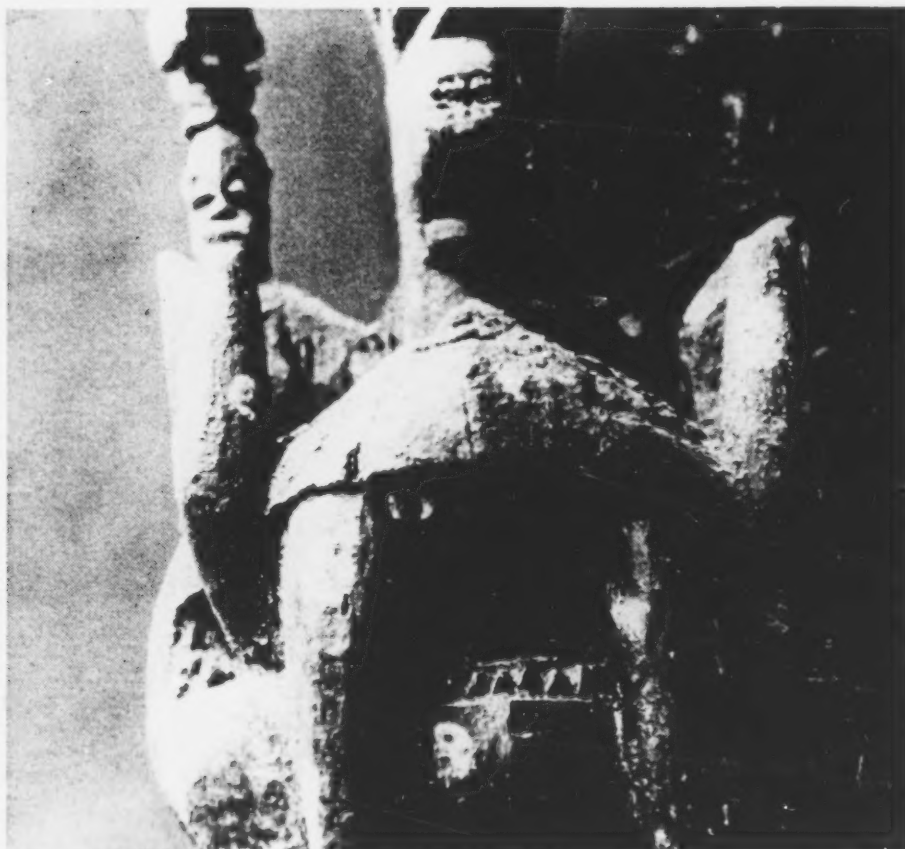
Aggression (negative, positive, and balanced)

Finding lost and stolen goods

Being strong in instances when you must be aggressive

Handout 49: *Ivri* (close-up)

Urhobo, Nigeria



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Lesson 14: Mother with Twins

Fante, Ghana

What is honored in a shrine sculpture?
What is honored in a community?

What is the role of the mother in African society?
How is *mother* a metaphor for a role in society?

Handout 50: A Shrine with Clothed Portrait Figures

Ghana

A small entourage of people surround clothed terra cotta figures of a chief, the queen mother, and the court caller seated on special (*asipim*) chairs.



Photograph courtesy of the Ghana Information Service in Cole and Ross, *The Arts of Ghana*, p. 123.

Section 3: 198

Lesson 14: Mother with Twins

Fante, Ghana

Summary of the Lesson

Students look at a slide of the Mother and Twins, discuss how art conveys cultural beliefs about an individual's role in his or her society, and participate in art and/or literary activities.

- GOAL** Students will discuss the Mother and Twins sculpture in order to understand the real and symbolic meanings of motherhood as conveyed in a terra cotta⁴⁰ funerary item from Ghana.
- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will discuss the use and manufacture of terra cotta sculptures in Ghana.
 2. Students will identify the role, responsibilities, and meaning of motherhood in the Fante culture of Ghana.
 3. Students will identify and create ways to represent the concept of mother in clay and through collage. Students will discuss representations of mother and child in art history.
- METHODS** Slide 19, observation and discussion
Creative art activities
- MATERIALS** Slide projector and screen
Clay, magazines and photos, glue sticks, paper, scissors
- HANDOUTS** 50: A Shrine with Clothed Portrait Figures
51: Terra Cotta Portrait Head
52: Terra Cotta Mother and Twins
53: An Outdoor Shrine

⁴⁰ a glazed or unglazed fired clay used especially for statuettes and vases.
Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 9th ed., s.v. "terra cotta."

BACKGROUND

S L I D E

1
9

Fante terra cotta figures are made from clay that is unglazed and baked. This clay is found in great quantities in Ghana. It ranges from gray to red-orange or red-brown in color.

Terra cotta sculptures have a long history of use in southern Ghana. They express three major ideas about the dead:

The dead are present among the mourners during the funeral rite.

The dead need to be sent to the next world in a proper manner.

The dead need to and like to travel with others like them to the world beyond.

These sculptures were made by women artists (Handout 51), presented during funerals, and afterwards arranged in an outdoor sanctuary or kept in a shrine (Handout 53).

Some of the terra cotta figures represent mothers, the relationship of mothers to children, and queen mothers. The queen mother is an ancestor, and she may also be a living matriarch whose guidance and judgment is sought under specific circumstances. The mother in this portrait looks as if someone has come to her saying, "Mother, save me!" and she is offering her care and strength (Handout 52).⁴¹

Queen mother is synonymous with the phrase "she who nurses children," and refers to woman as the life giver and nurturer, but it is also a metaphor for one who nourishes an entire nation. *Mother* is responsible for the maintenance of the healthy existence of the individual baby, and also for the well-being of the group of individuals who make up the society, and the societies of individuals that make up the nation.

*The main duties of the queen mother are giving of life to the clan or the state, at its foundation, and then maintaining this life.*⁴²

In this art object, the mother and children sit together (Handout 52). In a seated position, one is said to be at rest. In Ghana, it is thought that one who rests in a chair can concentrate on important issues and can take his or her place as an

⁴¹ Thompson, *African Art in Motion*, p. 68.

⁴² Eva Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 28.

honored guest or member of a group assembly. Sitting can be seen as a manner that denotes composure, a time when one can deliberate on important matters, or a way to show the world one's position in society. A sense of divine order and ease can be shown by sitting.

The mother supports both children on her knee; her pose suggests peace and harmony. The children seem comforted and ready to impart their feeling of goodwill to others.

DISCUSSION

Look at the face of the mother. What qualities does she seem to possess? What features has the artist chosen to portray in this work of art?

Her round face is beautiful, happy, and serene. Her head is spherical, her eyes are small slits. She has rings around her neck (slight rolls of fat in the neck are a sign of beauty in Ghana). The artist has depicted the mother with a pronounced navel, reminding us of our anatomical link to our mothers.

Look at how she holds her children. Do they look secure or do they look like they may fall at any moment?

They are seated securely. They appear to be a part of the same structure as the mother figure. The figures are balanced and symmetrical. The mental attributes of dignity, integrity, stability, and balance are conveyed through this work of art.

Based on what we have just looked at, can you say anything about the relationship of this mother to her children?

The mother supports both children on her knees. Her back is straight and tall; she is strong. She is a firm foundation for them to rest upon. She reaches out to support her children, protecting them with her arms. Their posture suggests camaraderie, openness, and a peace among them.

Can you think of another African work of art that speaks of an inner essence of a person, or balance in one's life?

The ile ori (house of the head).

Ceramic artists who make these figures must work hard in order to show the faces and features well. What do you think the artist is telling us about the three figures by their facial expressions? Do you think emotion or trust is conveyed?

Discuss.

This sculpture is made from the earth (clay). Why do you think clay was used here to depict a mother image?

In many parts of Africa, the earth is seen as a mother. The artist used a material that symbolizes motherhood to create the image of a mother. There is a strong connection between them.

ACTIVITIES

1. Hand-Building Clay Figures

Make clay figures using the pinch, coil, and hand-building techniques. Represent a female ancestor in a manner appropriate for placement in a family shrine, family altar, or a public cemetery.

2. Photo Collage

Look for photos of families, friends, or other people's families and friends or groups of unrelated people found in magazines. Place these in a collage with photocopy images of the Mother and Twins and the portrait head interspersed in the work (Handouts 51 and 52). Compare and contrast the composition of those photos with the composition of this sculpture. Think about how nurturing and caretaking behavior is expressed nonverbally. Discuss how expressive, nurturing behavior is shown to others, as this sculpture shows us these qualities.

Look at other works of art based on the theme of mother and child. Are these showing safety, protection, care, and loving behavior?

Often, yes. This ideal has been represented in art throughout time in mother and child images.

Handout 51: Terra Cotta Portrait Head

Ghana



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 3: 203

Handout 52: Terra Cotta Mother and Twins

Ghana



Seattle Art Museum photograph

Section 3: 205

Handout 53: An Outdoor Shrine

Ghana



Nineteenth-century photo of terra cotta grave figures and heads seated in an outdoor shrine in Ghana.

Photograph courtesy of the Basel Mission in Cole and Ross, *The Arts of Ghana*, p. 119.

Section 3: 207

Handout 54: Map of Africa



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: K-2 ACTIVITIES

S
L
I
D
E

2
0

MATERIALS Slide 20, projector and screen
Clay, cardboard or stiff paper, markers or crayons, magazines,
scissors, tape, cardboard tubes (from paper towels)



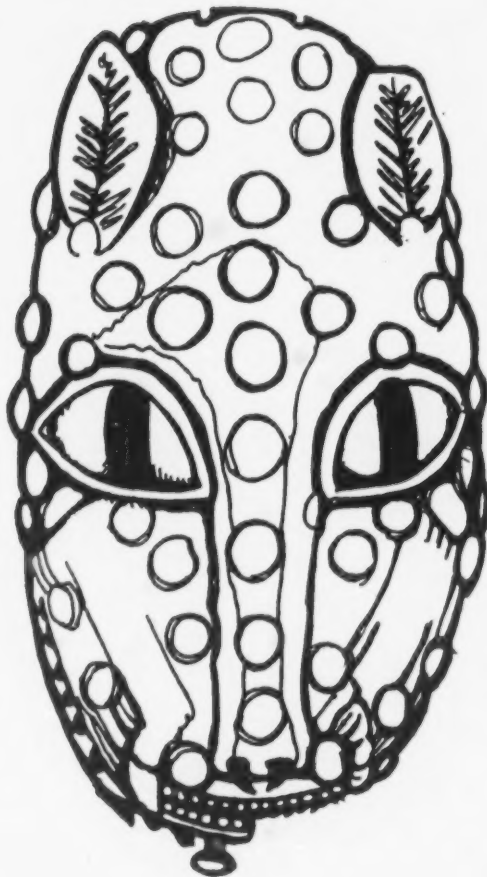
Seattle Art Museum photograph

Leopard Belt Mask (16th century)

The leopard's praise name is Ekpelobo (eh-pah-lo-bo'), which means "quick in catching." The oba, ruler of Benin, wore this ivory leopard around his waist attached by a belt. The oba is said to be like a leopard; as the leopard rules the forest, so the oba rules the kingdom and the cities.

Drawing Activity

Draw the leopard. Notice his leaf ears, spotted face, sharp teeth, cat eyes, and constant gaze. Talk about the animal qualities represented (strength, patience, swiftness). Is there an animal you like? Do you have something in common with it? Choose an animal and draw it. Draw what you like about it, and what you have in common with it.

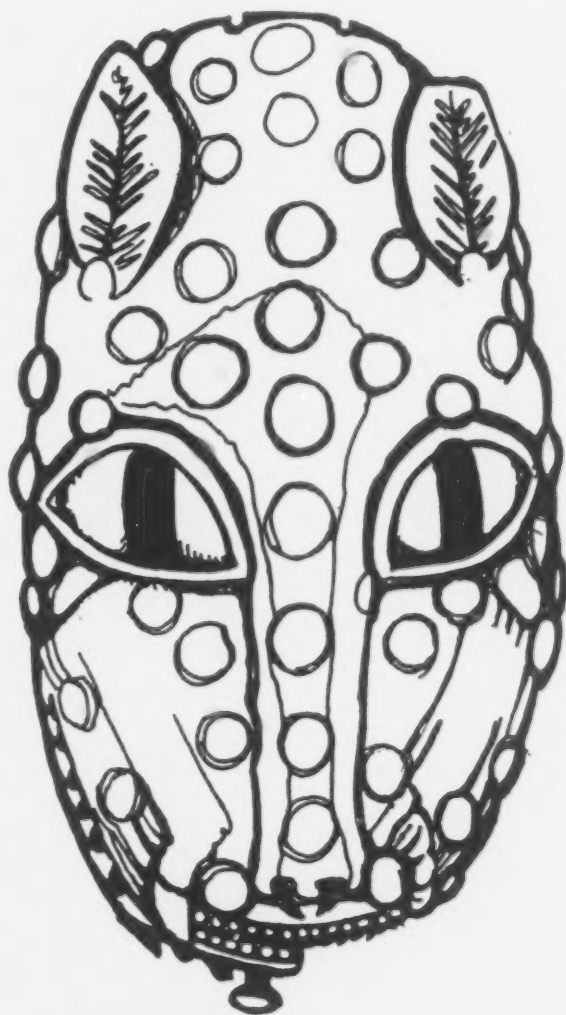


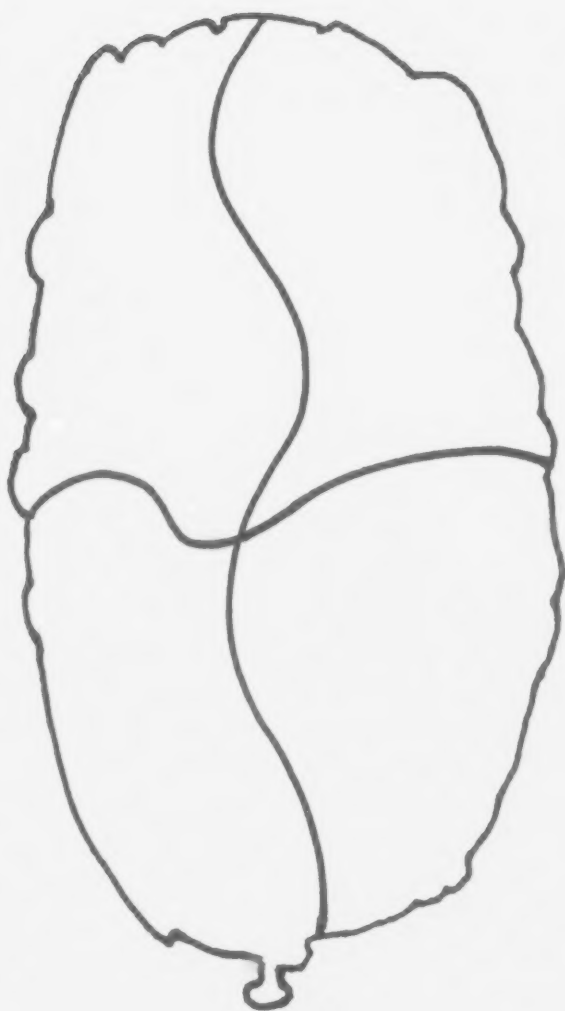
Leopard Belt Mask (16th century)

The leopard's praise name is Ekpelobo (eh-pah-lo-bo'), which means "quick in catching." The oba, ruler of Benin, wore this ivory leopard around his waist attached by a belt. The oba is said to be like a leopard; as the leopard rules the forest, so the oba rules the kingdom and the cities.

Puzzle

Photocopy the leopard image. Color it and cut it out. Glue it onto a piece of heavy paper. On the back, draw a series of lines. Cut the leopard out. This is your leopard puzzle.





Leopard Belt Mask (16th century)

The leopard's praise name is Ekpelobo (eh-pah-lo-bo'), which means "quick in catching." The oba, ruler of Benin, wore this ivory leopard around his waist attached by a belt. The oba is said to be like a leopard; as the leopard rules the forest, so the oba rules the kingdom and the cities.

Write a Story

Write a leopard story using a format such as the one below.

I am _____ and I look at _____

I rule the forest as the _____

I feel like _____

I think that _____

When people see me, they say _____

I am Leopard, I am _____



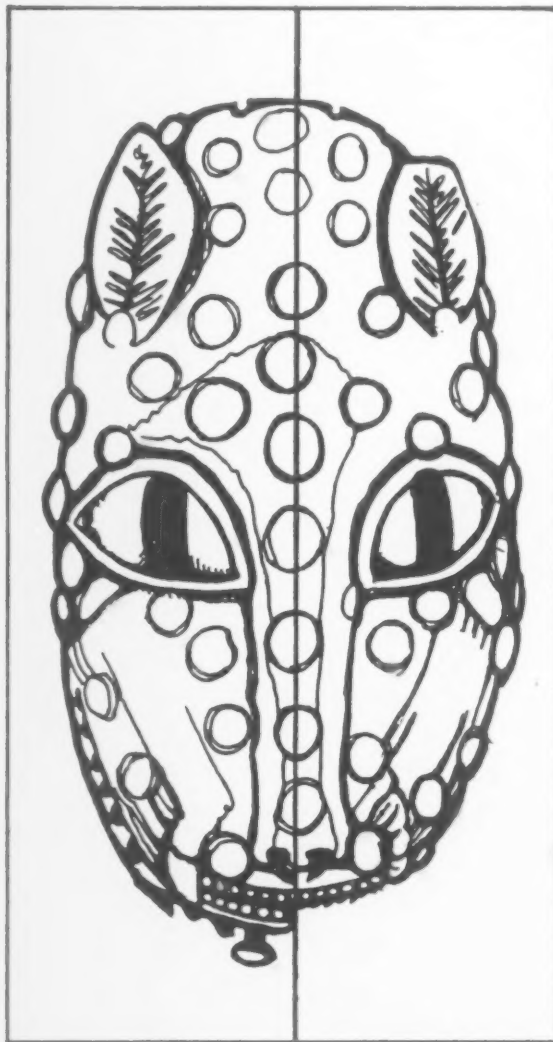
In addition to the written story, you could tell a story about a leopard and its adventures, or you could create masks and act out a story involving a leopard and other animals of the forest.

Leopard Belt Mask (16th century)

The leopard's praise name is Ekpelobo (eh-pah-lo-bo'), which means "quick in catching." The oba, ruler of Benin, wore this ivory leopard around his waist attached by a belt. The oba is said to be like a leopard; as the leopard rules the forest, so the oba rules the kingdom and the cities.

Leopard Matching Game

Photocopy the leopard image, cut it out, and glue it onto stiff paper or cardboard. On the back, draw your version of the leopard. On the front, color the leopard. Cut in half. Match the halves. Trade your halves with other students' halves. Compare the differences.

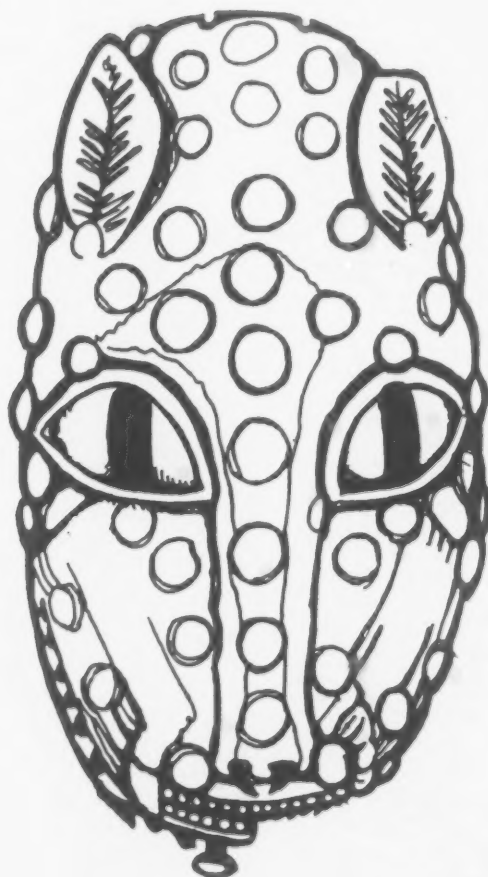


Leopard Belt Mask (16th century)

The leopard's praise name is Ekpelobo (eh-pah-lo-bo'), which means "quick in catching." The oba, ruler of Benin, wore this ivory leopard around his waist attached by a belt. The oba is said to be like a leopard; as the leopard rules the forest, so the oba rules the kingdom and the cities.

"Life in the Forest" Mobile

Make a mobile that shows the different relationships in the environment—leopards running through the forest, sun and water nourishing plants, animals nibbling on the savannah. Find out about leopards and where they live. Find or draw pictures of the leopard's world, cut them out, and tape them to string or yarn. Attach them to hollow cardboard tubes and hang them up in the classroom. Follow their movements in the wind.

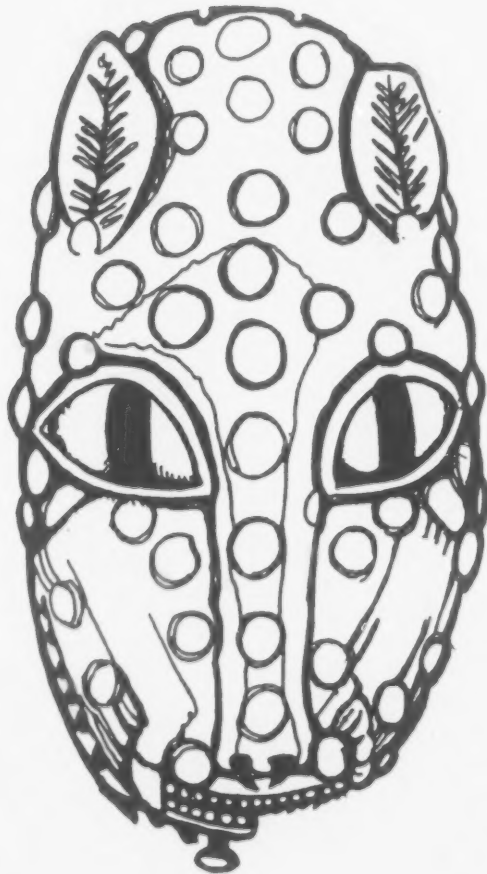


Leopard Belt Mask (16th century)

The leopard's praise name is Ekpelobo (eh-pah-lo-bo'), which means "quick in catching." The oba, ruler of Benin, wore this ivory leopard around his waist attached by a belt. The oba is said to be like a leopard; as the leopard rules the forest, so the oba rules the kingdom and the cities.

Make a Clay Mask

Make a clay mask using the leopard belt mask as your model.



SLIDE LIST

1. Oba Akenzua II

The oba is the spiritual and political leader of his people. Obas have ruled for many centuries in the Kingdom of Benin (which still exists, although it is now within the political boundaries of Nigeria). This photo of the oba was taken in 1958 in Benin City, Nigeria. Photograph by William Fagg, copyright the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

2. Throne of Queen Bo. Laikom, Kom, Cameroon. 81.17.718

The woman shown in this sculpture is Queen Mother Bo. At one time she was covered with beads from head to toe, except for her face and hands, which were covered in copper. She is still wearing her beaded collar and holds her hands in a gesture of respect, greeting, or as an offering of kola nut to the fon (the ruler of the Kom people). Queen Bo led her people during their migration to their present homeland in Laikom. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

3. A Fon with the Royal Throne Figures in Cameroon

Royal throne figures such as Queen Bo (above) are always made in sets of two or three (male and female). Throne figures are representations of past leaders. They express history and the lineage of the ancestors. The throne figures also express the relationship between men and women, and the way in which men and women work together and complement each other.

This photo, taken in Cameroon in the 1970s, shows a set of royal throne figures together. Photograph by Tamara Northern in Northern, *The Royal Arts*.

4. Ma kpon (Dan Gameboard). Dan, Liberia and Ivory Coast. 81.17.205

Gameboards such as this one have been used since ancient Egyptian times. The game known as *mankala*, *mano*, *ayo*, or *wari*, involves moving pieces in and out of the cups with the objective of capturing the most game pieces. The gameboard is decorated with incised lines that seem to indicate the anatomy of a ram; its head appears on the end of the board. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

5. Woman Wearing Adire Eleko Cloth. Yoruba, Nigeria.

Adire is a word meaning "to take, to tie, and to dye." *Adire* is an indigo-dyed cloth made with intricate designs that are either stitched, tied, stamped, or painted onto the fabric. The designs used are from everyday life, such as **wires, birds, combs, bikes, or motorcycles**. The designs on this slide are of ostrich, ducks, and leaves. Photograph by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, *Yoruba*.

6. Nifahene Nana Kwame Ampomah (nee-fah-hee-nee nah-nah kwah-may ahm-poh-mah) of Ghana wearing a kente cloth, gold jewelry, seated with an adinkra cloth behind

him. Photograph by Dennis Warren in *African Arts Magazine*, Winter 1975.

7. **Wunkirmian (Feast-Making Spoon).** Dan, Liberia and Ivory Coast. 81.17.204
Women were honored as *wunkirle* because of their generous and hospitable natures. The large spoon, a metaphor for generosity, was awarded to a specific woman by her community as a testimonial to her magnanimity (see next slide). Seattle Art Museum photograph.

8. **Wunkirle Woman with Feast-Making Spoon.** Dan, Liberia.
A *wunkirle* (feast-making woman) is among her peers with the feast-making spoon. This woman is the one known for her ability and willingness to feed and shelter those who come to her. She is publicly acknowledged for her giving nature. Photograph by Eberhard Fischer in Fischer and Himmelheber, *The Arts of the Dan*.

9. **Mother Tyi Wara with Baby.** Bamana, Mali. 81.17.23
The mother Tyi Wara appears with her baby on her back whom she supports and nurtures. Her long antlers are similar to the grains that grow in the cultivated fields, representing the relationship between the earth, Tyi Wara, and humankind. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

10. **Tyi Wara in the Field.** Bamana, Mali.
The Tyi Wara masquerade reminds people of the lessons of Tyi Wara, the spirit animal who came to them long ago to teach them about farming and respect for the earth and things of the earth. The male (left) and female with baby Tyi Wara dance together in the field, their raffia representing rain, their antelope/ aardvark bodies representing agility, strength, and perseverance. Here is an example of the male and female complementing each other with their strength, working together to ensure a harmonious life for the community. Photograph courtesy of Pascal James Imperato, M.D.

11. **Epa: Oloko (Lord of the Farm) Mask.** Yoruba, Nigeria. 81.17.580
Epa headdresses are massive wooden sculptures that weigh up to 60 pounds. The dancer wears this Epa virtually all day during his performance, taking care to never fall, stumble, or otherwise show lack of strength or disrespect for the ancestors and the Epa performance. The large head on the bottom represents the ancestors, "the great ones who have come before." Seattle Art Museum photograph.

12. **Festival Ekito (Oloko Masquerade).** Yoruba, Nigeria.
This photograph shows a Yoruba festival of the Epa masquerade. The masquerader in this slide is wearing the Epa Oloko (Lord of the Farm) headdress (as seen in slide 12). Photograph by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, *Yoruba*.

13. **Basinjom.** Ejagham/Banyang, Upper Cross River, Cameroon. 81.17.1977
Basinjom appears in the community, unannounced, to identify and judge individuals who have been acting negatively. He publicly declares the individual's wrongdoing, and the individual, having learned humility, confesses. Basinjom is the "moral police" (Robert Farris Thompson). Seattle Art Museum photograph.

14. **Basinjom's Face.** Ejagham/Banyang, Upper Cross River, Cameroon.
Basinjom is protected and strengthened by the herbal medicines placed on his clay head. His feathers from the blue war bird, his mirrored eyes, and his crocodile mouth also give him power which he uses to ensure harmony in his society. Photograph by Robert Farris Thompson in Thompson, *African Art in Motion*.

15. **Ogo Elegba: Eshu Staff.** Yoruba, Nigeria. 81.17.592
Eshu is the trickster deity responsible for creating chaos in a person's life. Eshu teaches us that nothing is ever known with complete certainty. Eshu's work helps us to know that it is through our hardships that we are reminded to communicate with, and be close to, our spirit helpers. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

16. **Eshu Devotee with her Eshu Shrine.** A devotee of Eshu supports her shrine. The cascade of cowrie shells shows the wealth and prestige of Eshu. Photograph by John Pemberton III in Pemberton, *Yoruba*.

17. **Ile Ori (House of the Head).** Yoruba, Nigeria. 81.17.577
The Yoruba believe in an outer head (the physical head that the world sees) and the inner head, the one responsible for self-control, or the controller of their fate. Before being born on the earth, Ajala gives people their heads. Ajala, unfortunately, sometimes produces heads that are imperfect, causing a troublesome future for the person with a defective head. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

Ile ori is a shrine for the (inner) head, which is represented as a leather cone encased in a cowrie shell and leather sculpture.

18. **Ivri (Shrine Figure).** Urhobo, Nigeria. 81.17.532
An individual makes offerings of foods such as kola nut and yams to the shrine. The food serves as a symbol of the excess aggression in the person that *ivri* is consuming. This keeps hostility in check. Too much aggression may overtake a person and cause harm in the community. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

19. **Mother and Twins.** Fante, Ghana. 81.17.442
Terra cotta figures such as this one were created by women artists, used during funerals, and kept in outdoor shrines. Mother is a representation of the mother in a family group, but mother is also a symbol for someone who nurtures an entire community and the nation. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

20. **Okpelobo:** Leopard Belt Mask. Benin, Nigeria. 81.17.494
Okpelobo means "quick in catching." It refers to the leopard's ability to be swift, decisive, and powerful. The oba (the ruler of Benin) was said to share characteristics with the leopard, and as the leopard ruled the forest, the oba ruled the kingdom. Seattle Art Museum photograph.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barbour, Jane, and Doig Simmonds, eds. *Adire Cloth of Nigeria*. Ibadan, Nigeria: University of Ibadan, Institute of African Studies, 1971.
- African Arts Magazine*. Regents of the University of California, Los Angeles, California.
- Ben-Amos, Paula. *The Art of Benin*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1980.
- Black Ancestral Legacy, The African Impulse in African-American Art*. Dallas and New York: Dallas Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989.
- Cole, Herbert M., and Doran H. Ross. *The Arts of Ghana*. Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1977.
- Feretti, Paul. *Afo-A-Kom, A Sacred Art of Cameroon*. New York: Okpaku Press, 1975.
- Fischer, Eberhard, and Hans Himmelheber. *The Arts of the Dan in West Africa*. Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1984.
- Feyer, Bryna. *Royal Benin Art in the Collection of the National Museum of African Art*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1987.
- Foss, W. Perkins. *The Arts of the Urhobo Peoples of Southern Nigeria*. M.A. Thesis, Yale University. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International.
- Games of the World: How to Make Them, How to Play Them, and How They Came to Be*. Zurich: Swiss Committee for UNICEF, 1982.
- de la Croix, Horst, and Richard G. Tansey. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. 8th ed. (Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986.
- Kurian, George Thomas. *Encyclopedia of the Third World*. 3rd ed. Vols. I-III. New York: Facts on File, 1987.
- McCarthy, Bernice. *4Mat in Action: Creative Lesson Plans for Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/Left Mode Techniques*. Barrington, Ill.: Excel, Inc., 1983.

- McClusky, Pamela. *Praise Poems: The Katherine White Collection*. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1984.
- Meyerowitz, Eva. *The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs*. London: Faber and Faber, 1958.
- National Geographic Magazine*, The National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.
- The 1991 Information Please Almanac*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991.
- Northern, Tamara. *The Art of Cameroon*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1984.
- Pemberton, John III. *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989.
- Selected Works*. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1991.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *African Art in Motion*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974.
- The World Almanac of Books and Facts 1991*. New York: Pharos Books, 1991.
- Yoruba Blue: Symbols on Cloth*. Cambridge, Mass.: Educational Development Center, 1972.

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:

Seattle Art Museum Education Department

Address:

P.O. Box 22000

Seattle WA 98122

Price:

\$32.00 (+ tax for Washington residents of \$3.01 and \$3 shipping)

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address.

Name:

Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

Art
ERIC/CHESS
2805 E. Tenth Street, #120
Bloomington, IN 47408

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2d Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080

Toll Free: 800-799-3742

FAX: 301-953-0263

e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov

WWW: <http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com>